

COMMUNIST REVIEW

Central Organ of the International Bureau

for the Revolutionary Party

Mexican Earthquake : Communique from Mexico

Draft Theses on Tasks of Communists

in Capitalism's Periphery

Communism in India - Correspondence

£ 1.00

Number 3.

Winter 1985

US \$2.00

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Subscriptions:

Communist Review appears twice a year. The annual subscription is £2.00. All cheques and money orders should be made out to the CW0 and sent to the Glasgow address.

Introduction

In Communist Review #2 we noted that since its formation "the work of the International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party has proceeded apace". Since that was written this pace has shown no signs of slackening. The Bureau's committee in France has just produced Revue Communiste #4 whilst contact with revolutionaries outside of the capitalist heartlands has intensified.

As readers of Workers Voice (see #24) and Battaglia Comunista (#9 and 10) will already know, this has been particularly true of India where our intervention has helped the emergence of a new political milieu which is in the process of struggling to achieve clarity by rejecting all the old anti-communist Stalinist and Trotskyist ideologies for revolutionary Marxism. Only considerations of space have forced us to cut or omit any letters in this promising correspondence.

The Bureau has also continued to correspond with revolutionary elements in South America. From Argentina we have received a copy of Emancipación Obrera #6 which is devoted entirely to questions of unemployment and attacks on the working class in that country. We hope to translate and publish extracts from this in the near future but the recent receipt of a political statement by the Alptraum Communist Collective of Mexico on the bourgeoisie's use of the aftermath of the earthquake there to step up its austerity programme against the working class demanded instant publication.

Whilst the communique from Mexico demonstrates that the task of the workers is the same everywhere the recent correspondence with Indian, Iranian and Latin American comrades has compelled us to discuss in greater depth the general tasks of communists in the capitalist periphery. In publishing our critique of the Programme of the Communist Party of Iran in CR #1 and the Theses of the Alptraum Communist Collective in CR #2 we have already begun to do this but the draft Theses on the Tasks of Communists in Capitalism's Periphery by the PCInt is intended to stimulate that

discussion still further. With the effects of the capitalist crisis creating massive poverty and class anger held down only by brutally oppressive state apparatus in these areas, we can expect more and more social explosions like that in South Africa. The discussion on the Theses therefore is part of the Bureau's ongoing task of providing a reference point for the inevitable emergence of proletarian forces in these areas. Such forces are the necessary basis for the future construction of the centralised and world-wide instrument which will lead the proletarian revolution: the International Party of the Proletariat.

I.B.R.P. November, 1985

Communique from Mexico (October 1985)

We recently received the following communique from the Colectivo Comunista Alptraum in Mexico. We are glad to see the comrades themselves have survived the earthquake and have been able to send us this report which graphically depicts how the effects of a "natural disaster" are heightened by and channeled through capitalist social relations.

Comrades,

In this communique we would like to expose the truth about recent events in Mexico and our position regarding them.

On 19th and 20th September two powerful earthquakes caused severe damage in Mexico city (mainly the central area) and in some provinces. Thousands of people died (about 30,000) and thousands more were injured; the nerve centre of the bourgeois state's system of communications was destroyed, breaking contact with the rest of the country and the outside world; hundreds of public and private buildings (offices and factories) collapsed, as did apartments, houses, hospitals, schools and hotels.

This catastrophe which has only taken a few words to summarise though the reality is terrible in both its scale and its consequences, once more exposes the real nature of the bourgeois Mexican state. In spite of stemming from "natural" causes it has to be seen within the historical context of the laws which govern capitalist society. Thus, the overcrowded, insanitary and chaotic growth of the city, along with unemployment, further aggravated the consequences of this natural disaster.

The area where most buildings collapsed (the city centre) has a high concentration of workers living in unhealthy and dilapidated dwellings. The flats which fell down were also occupied by low-paid workers, mainly state employees. The number of deaths in these buildings was very high, in direct proportion to the level of overcrowding of the population and the high concentration of very poor houses.

On top of this desperate situation the working class is faced with high unemployment. Already critical, this has increased with the destruction and damage done to many workplaces. Many capitalists with factories (textiles, clothes) in the devastated area have used the situation to sack workers. These events have fundamentally affected the working class whose precarious, overcrowded and poverty-stricken existence has now been aggravated as thousands who managed to save themselves remain without jobs, houses or belongings. We know that the bourgeois state, by its very nature, will be unable to solve these problems. On the contrary, it is using this tragedy to reify, strengthen and underline its political domination over the workers and wage-labouring population in general. In the affected areas it has declared a state of siege under the control of the inept body of armed police (whose sole function is to repress the workers and maintain bourgeois order).

Even though there has been no publicity, we can confirm that some workers have spontaneously organised - without any resources or adequate training - effective action for recovery and have risked their lives in solidarity gestures. The Army has limited itself to "preserving order" and private capitalist property. The all-powerful President and his long train of officials made fulsome declarations of "solidarity and sorrow" but in practice did little to save the lives of those who remain within the heaps of rubble. Their only interest was in defending "law and order" and private property. Through official statements and the media the State has tried to replace the incipient solidarity of the workers with rabid nationalism, calling for national unity to strengthen "today more than ever the solidarity of Mexicans in confronting the problems which depress[sic] the people". Amongst these problems we, of course, find the crisis.

The tragedy arrived at an opportune and critical moment for the bourgeoisie which has used it to bring out and polish the fetish of the nation and the inter-class solidarity of "all Mexicans to build a new Mexico". Apparently the international bourgeoisie has responded solidly to the case of its Mexican fraction because it has agreed long-term credit so that it can pay the interest on its debt and has conceded new credits and financial aid to rebuild the damaged infrastructure, etc.

The left-wing of capital has also joined in the chorus for "the battered nation" and for "national brotherhood", attempting to undermine the fragmentary organisations which the inhabitants of the devastated areas have set up to defend themselves against the State's attempts to evict them or force them to rebuild houses (e.g. public sector workers). The left of capital, now in government, has insisted that parliament is the "adequate channel" which must be used for "raising demands". The unions quickly answered the State's call for "national solidarity for reconstruction" by decreeing that workers work an extra hour a day for an unspecified period; telling the workers that this is no time for strikes or demands for bigger wages but for raising productivity. As you can see, the Mexican bourgeoisie has used the situation to impose more sacrifices on the proletariat. What better moment will it find for increasing the working day, cutting wages, throwing thousands of workers on the streets and intensifying exploitation? In fact two weeks after the earthquake the bourgeoisie and its State prepared a series of measures which will worsen the workers condition. We believe it is necessary that you know about the situation here because we know that the Mexican bourgeoisie is promoting the myth that the Mexican proletariat accepts austerity every time the bourgeoisie requires it to because, unlike other workers it has "full national consciousness". Nothing could be more mystificatory or false. If it is true that the workers here are highly alienated by nationalism, in the sense that they have not developed an organised opposition, neither do they passively accept austerity as the bourgeoisie pretends. Thus the working class is not only hit by tragic natural phenomena but also has rising before it the spectre of the nation's bourgeoisie which demands greater sacrifices in its thirst for surplus value.

FOR THE ABOLITION OF WAGE LABOUR

CCA

PUBLICATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

The International Bureau and its constituent organisations regularly publish:

In French:

Revue Communiste [three times a year] 15FF a copy. RC/4 has just been issued and contains articles on the PCF, Trotskyism and the perspectives of the Bureau.

In Italian:

The Internationalist Communist Party publishes Battaglia Comunista [monthly], subscription 5000 lire a year; and a theoretical journal - Prometeo, 3000 lire a copy.

In English:

The Communist Workers Organisation publishes Workers Voice [9 issues a year], subscription £3.00 a year; and Revolutionary Perspectives, a theoretical journal [£1.00 a copy]. RP/23 will be the last and will contain articles on the Russian Revolution and the composition of the working class today.

Draft Theses on the Tasks of Communists

in Capitalism's Periphery

Preamble

The existence of the proletariat as a global class stems from capitalism's global domination over society. Both the defining characteristics of the proletariat confirm its international nature. As a "class-in-itself", i.e. as the variable element of capital in its process of production and reproduction, the proletariat follows the international fate of capitalism which - in its advanced imperialist period - has now confirmed its absolute domination in every corner of the globe. As a "class-for-itself", as the historic antagonist of the class dominating the capitalist mode of production, the proletariat will be able to affirm its own programme of emancipation only at an international level.

"Socialism is international or it is nothing" is a fundamental tenet of the communist movement. Over the last six decades this has been confirmed and consolidated by the Communist Left (especially in Italy) in its struggles against the counter-revolution which, in ideological terms, is based on the mystification of "socialism in one country". Though the proposal to build socialism in one country betrays the methodological framework and scientific achievements of Marxism, it had to be used to justify the economic reconstruction of the USSR, after war and revolution, on the national basis of state capitalism. Such capitalist reconstruction was made possible by the revolutionary elimination of the feeble bourgeois economic structure of the classical privatised kind and was made easier by the defeat of the European revolutionary wave in the 1920s.

Alongside the internationalism of the proletariat and its historic perspectives, which correspond to the international rule of capital, goes the single international historic programme of the proletariat. Thus, a single class; a single programme!

Concretely this means we reject the view that the proletariat acts alongside other classes or other programmes, in order to realise economic phases or social and state forms between the present bourgeois structure and the future dictatorship of the proletariat. Another important question follows from this methodological principle. Does the distinction between the maximum and minimum programme make sense? The international communist movement has to give a clear reply to this in order to overcome any ambiguity.

This distinction between the two programmes was the distinctive trait of the Second International. Moreover, by concentrating on the achievement and defence of the "minimum programme" the organisations of the Second International pushed into the distance any perspective of achieving the "maximum programme" (i.e. proletarian power and the building of socialism), first by forgetting about it and then later by openly betraying it. The Third International didn't manage to solve the problem. Although its programme and its platform were those of the socialist revolution - opposed in deeds to reformist ideas and to mediation with bourgeois forces - the International still did not develop a clear and definitive position on this point.

It is up to the present-day communist movement therefore to overcome the old ambiguity, stating clearly that the Communist Party has only one programme: the dictatorship of the proletariat and the construction of socialism. It is this which differentiates the Communist Party from all other parties as well as from petty-bourgeois forces inside the proletarian camp who see no ultimate goal for the workers' movement. It is by defending and following this programme that the proletariat guarantees the creation of its indispensable political instrument.

The particular tactics the Communist Party will have to adopt at various times and in certain situations must be subordinated to this programmatic goal. In any case the specific and contingent aims - which can and must correspond to the tactics adopted - cannot be assimilated as programmatic aims of the Party. That is to say, they cannot and must not in any sense become part of the communist programme.

In order to clarify this by an example, let's look at the question of the proletariat's class-wide organisations. The

national and international centralisation of workers councils based on their productive and territorial unification as a means of establishing social needs, the direction of production which follows on from this, the control of the executive function, etc., all this is in the communist programme. On the other hand, the communist programme doesn't contain - though it is a communist tactic - the liberation of the working class from the union gaul via its autonomous organisation in factory assemblies, co-ordinated and centralised by the election of recallable delegates. This tactical line is validated by historical experience and in clearly-expressed tendencies of previous great events in the class struggle, the last of which was in Poland in August 1980. But such a tactical aim cannot be considered of itself a step forward, a firm gain of a revolutionary process. The Polish events themselves demonstrated beyond doubt that if the workers' movement pursues such an aim without an overall strategy of attack on bourgeois power it is rapidly reabsorbed into the existing order and rechannelled along new social democratic and bourgeois lines inside the working class (such as the Danzig committee and the crypto-Catholic trades union of Solidarity). Thus we do not inscribe our working propositions and tactical lines in the communist programme but subordinate them to it, in the knowledge that the existence of Soviets oriented to the communist programme is possible only by starting from this tactical lesson.

Therefore when we define the general tactical lines of communist policy in the peripheral countries we must first take into account the new forms of reformist opportunism in "revolutionary" guise which assign regressive and inferior programmatic tasks to the Communist Party and thus in effect substitute a bourgeois programme for a communist one. We will have to do this, not for the aesthetic pleasure of formal and linguistic orthodoxy, but in the consciousness that the programme of a party is the theoretical skeleton around which its members and the organisation are shaped and develop. Unless the programme is a communist programme, the cadres and organisation cannot move along communist lines. If the members of an organisation find their programme contradicts the reality of the movement then the organisation will follow all the more easily a non-communist course.

We therefore have to re-elaborate and define the points which the experience of the Third International left either unresolved or ambiguous.

1. The motley collection of definitions given to countries outside the imperialist metropolises ("developing countries", "under-developed countries", "Third" or "Fourth World" countries, etc.) reflects the manifold ideological responses of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie to the problem of defining how they fit into the framework of the contemporary world as a whole.

"Third World countries". This term is linked, directly or indirectly, to the most common of bourgeois ideologies which sees the world as divided into three great camps: the capitalist (or advanced capitalist) camp; the socialist camp and those countries which are neither (advanced) capitalist nor socialist. Plenty of Left Communist literature has already done justice to this typically bourgeois and patently ideological (in the worst sense of the word) conception. It is hardly worth mentioning that this conception sustains and at the same time is sustained by Stalinism.

"Developing" or "under-developed countries". This term is applied by those who, starting from a reassuring idea of progress, consider each country's population as a single collectivity which is marching in unison along the same road of development, each one with identical aims, differing only in the speed of the march. The defenders of this definition don't even begin to take into account the differing histories of the various social and economic formations, let alone consider their subordination to imperialism. Since their theory and methodology ignores all this they can produce facts and figures based on the assumption (for them an axiom), that one day somewhere like Uganda will become like Australia today.

"Dominated countries". This is the term used by people who, though starting off from premises borrowed from Marxism, develop their ideas in a dangerously one-sided way. Even though the ideas are in themselves valid (for example, it is precisely imperialist domination which holds sway over these countries), their method brings them to erroneous conclusions. Those who begin with the concept of "dominated countries" are led to theorise about liberation from this domination independently - at least for a certain, unspecified, length of time - of the proletarian revolution. The concept of dominated countries necessarily implies that of dominating countries. But such a dichotomy necessitates a rigid classification of features which are applied mechanically to make the 'dominated' and 'dominating' countries recognisable and distinguishable. Now, if it is easy enough to define the USA or the USSR as 'dominating countries' it is not so for countries such as Italy or South Africa. According to the arguments advanced by the theorists of 'dominated countries' there is a long list of countries (from Venezuela to Brazil, from India to South Korea, from Spain to South Africa) which would merit both definitions: they are countries dominated by the imperialist centre to which

they belong, but dominating over others in so far as they participate in the international and financial network and in so far as they possess an extensive industrial apparatus and a high organic composition of capital.

2. No definition, therefore, can encompass the multiplicity and complexity of the phenomena which combine to determine the existence of these countries. Rather it can, and must, only express in general terms the position they occupy in relation to the citadels of imperialism. Thus, only a close examination of the facts themselves will be able to establish which are the most characteristic of any given country and how they affect its economic and social dynamic and consequently the tactical line for communists. One certainly cannot consider, for example, interchanging India's social and economic relations with those of Uganda. Here, therefore, we are adopting the general definition of peripheral capitalist countries, in order to distinguish them from the metropolitan countries whilst at the same time leaving open the possibility of making the required distinctions between them.

The distinction between centre and periphery expresses the Marxist conception of the present historical period. This is a period where imperialism dominates even the remotest corner of the globe, having super-imposed the laws of its international market and the economic mechanisms which accompany it on different pre-capitalist economic-social forms. The relations of production of a Niger plantation are not yet typical of capitalism (wage labour relations between the "free" workers and the owners of the means of production - the capitalists). But the Niger plantations are working for the international capitalist market and the population lives by what it can acquire from this market. Thus capitalism exercises a real domination over a social form which is untypical of capitalism. Niger, and many other countries, are therefore an integrated part of the capitalist world market. But they are on the periphery of a system which has its centre in countries like the USA and the USSR.

The 2nd World War left us with these two imperialist centres. Other countries aspire to the role of autonomous centre without being able to realise such a tendency. Thus China appears to have brilliantly succeeded here in becoming that sun without planets, but only through another world war would it be able to aspire - after having fought on the side of one or other bloc - to become a really independent centre. The EEC states in Europe from time to time demonstrate similar tendencies towards becoming an autonomous 'third centre'. Such moves receive the blessing of the 'New Left' but reality itself quickly confirms their membership of the American bloc.

Throughout the present cycle of accumulation - now in its final stage - the two centres have thus remained. In terms of war preparations many countries have yet to define their own positions "for the future" but up to now their dynamic has been within either one or other system which dominate relations between centre and periphery. In fact a lot of the most peripheral countries, because they are so peripheral, have been able to oscillate between the blocs; giving and taking (above all giving) here or

there. But they have always kept their essential character and position in the international capitalist system. Neither equidistance from the USA and USSR, nor the export of raw materials from one in order to buy from the other, has allowed them to become central to the world system of the capitalist mode of production.

3. The concept of countries peripheral to the world imperialist system allows us to pinpoint the basic coordinates of a Marxist analysis, either country by country or by groups.

The centre of the capitalist system draws these countries into its orbit through the export of goods and capital, the import of raw materials and agricultural products and their integration into the international system of the division of labour. At the same time as incorporating each country into its own cycle of reproduction and accumulation, capitalism exports its own contradictions to these countries. By super-imposing itself and its economic laws on social forms different from its own in origin, imperialist capitalism draws them into its accumulation cycle and into the network of its economic contradictions and class antagonisms. The modes and relations of production which imperialism finds, whilst being allowed to maintain a marginal existence, are subjected to the politics of imperialism's own survival and so the traditional social and political relations are also marginalised. And this mechanism for capital's domination, at the same time as preserving ancient and traditional modes of production and social relations, has misled entire generations of militants - even "high class" ones (such as the Bordighists) into thinking that the bourgeois revolution is still a historical necessity for many countries.

The theory is that the persistence of patriarchal, or at least pre-capitalist economic and social relations prevents their entering the capitalist world and its class contradictions. From this stems the necessity for the weak local proletariat to support national "anti-feudal" revolutions. But, on the contrary, the continued existence of pre-capitalist relations and "pre-bourgeois" social and political systems are both necessary and functional for imperialist domination. Necessary in the sense that the superimposition of capitalism is not so much determined by a perverse will to dominate politically and socially as by the fundamental economic imperatives of capital. The under-developed geo-political areas serve first as sources of raw materials and cheap labour, later as investment markets for capital (either productive or parasitic). This neither means the immediate bourgeoisification of these societies, nor the rapid transformation along capitalist lines of all the productive activity in these countries. But continued pre-capitalist relations of production with pre-capitalist social and political relations are also functional for imperialist domination because the contrast between the conditions of life of the industrial proletariat and the rest of the dispossessed masses ensures the division of the class on the one hand and the shifting of social and political tensions onto the terrain of bourgeois "progressivism" on the other. In this apparent contradiction between a backward pre-capitalist world and an advanced capitalist world, international capital finds the motives and the instruments for its own domination. Above all, it is thanks to the persistence of patriarchal relations and the strength of political and

administrative institutions linked to the social and civil traditions of these countries that international capital assures itself of its own domination.

The gradual (or when necessary, the accelerated) shaping of their social and political composition and political institutions to classical capitalist patterns is a consequence of the real economic domination of capital and the subordination of the economies of these countries to the international laws of the capitalist market.

To sum up; there is no contradiction between capitalist domination and the persistence of pre-capitalist economic relations. They are rather the condition for its continued domination. It is an historical paradox for certain political forces that the "Bordighism" of 1919-20 conducted a splendid battle along exactly these lines against Gramscism on the "southern question". The latter saw the persistence of pre-capitalist forms in the south of Italy as the basis for the politics of "completion of the bourgeois revolution" which the Italian bourgeoisie was said to have left uncompleted in the wars of 1848-71. The possible objection that in Italy there had been a bourgeois revolution which had subjected the South's economic development to Northern domination - in effect preventing this development and linking the agrarian bourgeoisie of the South to the mechanism of capital valorisation as a whole while in the peripheral countries this bourgeois revolution is absent - doesn't hold. Imperialist capitalism does not wait for bourgeois revolutions before affirming its domination over the peripheral countries. It wouldn't be imperialist capitalism - i.e. the conditions for its own expansion on a planetary scale would still not have matured and it would not yet have entered its historically decadent period if it still had a long period of expansion before it; if it still had in front of it the historic task of "conquering the world".

4. The maintenance of the old economic and social relations and their subordination to the interests of international imperialist domination, means that social and political formations in the peripheral countries differ from those in the metropolitan citadels. But this difference concerns the intermediate social strata which exist between the two fundamental classes. Thus it is not a difference between the two fundamental and historically antagonistic classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie.

Although the different forms of domination and oppression of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat are reflected in the various social formations, this doesn't negate the existence of the two classes. It is undeniable that in countries such as Niger or Bolivia there are other social strata and classes beyond the modern proletariat and the bourgeoisie. These are hangovers from social systems which preceded imperialist domination and correspond to the various earlier dominant tributary and mercantile modes of production. But this doesn't mean that any conflict amongst these strata and with the existing ruling class reduces the significance of the historical antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, for it is precisely this antagonism which reflects the domination of capital over society.

In Tsarist Russia in 1917 the industrial proletariat was numerically in the minority. But no communist (as opposed to social democratic Mensheviks) has yet to say that for this reason the proletarian class was not yet the historically fundamental antagonist to capital. From a strictly quantitative point of view the social composition of Tsarist Russia was predominantly peasant. But in fact it was Lenin who demonstrated in his Development of Capitalism in Russia that the peasant world itself was now totally subordinated to capitalism. Even the bourgeoisie's sociological and economic research shows clearly that social strata and classes untypical of capitalism survive although in a state of prolonged decomposition. Meanwhile "misery and proletarianisation of strata previously occupied in traditional subsistence or local mercantile economies" grows. [See "General Tendencies in the Composition of Classes" in Prometeo 8 p.8.] The fact that the capitalist mode of production has imposed itself over the diversity of social formations, upsetting the old social equilibrium; that its continued existence is based on the increasing misery of the growing masses of the proletarianised and dispossessed; means that political oppression and repression are therefore necessary. In the peripheral countries this creates a situation which has potential for the radicalisation of class consciousness.

Capital's domination in these countries is not yet total over society, it has not subjugated the entire collectivity to the laws and ideology of capital as it has in the metropolitan countries. In the peripheral countries the political and ideological integration of individuals into capitalist society is not the mass phenomenon of the metropolitan centres because the exploited individual, poverty-stricken and oppressed, is not yet the citizen-individual of the original capitalist formations. This difference with the metropolitan countries makes mass communist organisations a possibility in the periphery.

5. It is now a well-established part of the communist legacy that in the original capitalist centres (i.e. the metropolises) the Communist Party can only be a tiny minority in non-revolutionary periods.

The counter-revolutionary process which followed the Russian Revolution and the European revolutionary wave of 1918-20 dragged in its wake the Communist Parties and the masses linked to them. Thus they became part of the ideological and political terrain of capital, enabling the counter-revolution to reach the consciousness of every individual proletarian. Thus, even at times of crisis in its accumulation cycle like today, capital draws out its own precarious economic existence and still manages to keep intact the social, political and ideological framework which imprisons the whole population. The concept of the "integration" of the proletariat put about by petty bourgeois theorists like Marcuse in the Sixties is none other than an example of the complete domination of capital over advanced society. Far from nullifying the historical existence of the class and class conflict, it is rather an expression of the bourgeoisie's strength in the art of ruling and in corrupting political ideology.

Basically the Communist Parties at their birth - that is at the

time of the split with the old social democratic parties - were also mass parties in so far as they expressed the growing revolution in society. During the retreat they could not remain mass parties at the same time as remain revolutionary. The price for remaining with the masses was their retreat into reformism and opportunism. In fact the slogan "to the masses" which was the "theoretical" basis for the United Front that immediately followed was launched at the beginning of the retreat of the European proletariat and its political consequences were to be shaped by it. The revolutionary programme was gradually but inexorably abandoned in favour of a reformist programme, differing from others only in its relationship to and support for the Russian state model.

The retreat of the revolutionary wave saw the proletariat once again under the political and ideological leadership of the bourgeoisie. The revival of class initiative will have to coincide historically with the collapse of the base and superstructure of bourgeois society. This, in turn, must involve a process of "social ionisation" which alone will make the polarisation of the class round the communist programme possible. One condition is necessary for such a polarisation and that is that the organised political pole of the Communist Party should have a working existence and to this end it must begin to organise itself and act now. But all the above explains why the Communist Party can only be a party of a minority.

In the peripheral countries conditions are different. Here capital can't dominate in the same way as it does in its birthplace, in its metropolitan centres. For the reasons mentioned above bourgeois democracy - the most efficient weapon for the preservation of capital - has a precarious and therefore "different" life in the peripheral countries. Here there is no democratic opium to lull the masses into submission, but only the harshness of repression. Thus the material existence of the masses favours the radicalisation of consciousness and of struggles themselves when they occur.

Such radical potential facilitates the circulation of the revolutionary communist programme. Obviously we are not saying that radicalisation is the same as revolutionary communist consciousness. But the fact remains that it is easier to spread the communist programme amongst the masses and revolutionary communists receive "more attention" than in advanced capitalist societies. Such "better" conditions imply the possibility of organising masses of proletarians round the revolutionary party - at any rate certainly a better possibility than in the heartlands of capitalism. Organising round the party means forming organisations of struggle, of intervention, of agitation, directed politically by the Communist Party. It is from these that the Party draws its militant cadres and through them that it organises and leads the mass struggle.

6. The possibility of "mass" organisations led by communists is not the same as revolutionary leadership of the trades unions. And it doesn't imply the massification of the communist parties themselves. Rather it is an opportunity for the Communist Party to organise strong groups in the factories and localities as

instruments of agitation and intervention in the struggle. Even in the peripheral countries trade unions - as organs for negotiating the price and terms of sale of labour power - maintain the general and historical characteristics of all unions. Even though they remain one of the areas where communists work, intervene, make propaganda and agitate, they are not and will never be instruments for revolutionary attack. Thus leadership of them doesn't interest communists.

On the other hand, the nature and role of the Communist Party means that under capitalism it cannot be a mass organisation, since its militants would not have the necessary degree of homogeneity and professionalism. The Communist Party remains the conscious vanguard of the proletariat, the organisation which uses Marxist method and the lessons learned by the entire international proletariat to collectively elaborate and translate into practice the entire communist programme. The national sections in the peripheral countries are sections of an international organisation which develops the theory and defines the strategic and tactical lines of the movement. Therefore all sections participate as equals. This demands a homogeneity in the quality and preparation of cadres which alone can ensure that the highest quality, the best and most prepared cadres of the proletarian revolution are concentrated in the party's organs.

"Political" support for the revolutionary programme, this is to say adhesion to the perspectives and standpoint of the communist party which goes beyond one particular struggle or specific movement. is the necessary basis for the maturation of elements of the vanguard as communist cadres. But this in itself is not enough - that is, identifying with the communist programme is not the same as being a communist cadre. Basically the problem is the same in the advanced countries and our current has responded to it with its theses on communist "factory groups", in which advanced workers gather round party cadres, thus placing them under the direct influence and guidance of the party. The specific characteristic of the peripheral countries is that these conditions exist not only in the factories and the restricted area of operation for the revolutionary minority in a situation of social peace, but on a far wider territorial scale in the cities and in the countryside. Thus in these countries the organisation of strong territorial communist groups is possible. "Territorial groups" because they gather proletarians, semi-proletarians, dispossessed together "in a mass" under the direct influence of the party; "communist" precisely because they are directed along communist lines - that is, they are animated and led by cadres and organs of the party.

7. The "national bourgeoisie" of each peripheral country is national only by the birth certificate of its members and by the particular type of oppressive political institution it bestows upon "its" national section of the proletariat. But the bourgeoisie of the peripheral countries is a constituent part of the international bourgeoisie which dominates the whole system of exploitation because it is in possession of the means of production on an international scale. As such, every national section of the bourgeois participates with equal responsibility and with the same historical destiny in the division of surplus value which is extorted internationally from the proletariat.

We are deliberately saying "in possession" of the means of production and not "ownership" because the term 'ownership' implies the juridical notion of property which can assume a variety of forms until it is negated. It is of fundamental importance to note that formal state ownership of the means of production a) does not eliminate the relations of capitalist exploitation; b) does not eliminate the existence of a class which materially appropriates the surplus value produced. In many peripheral countries in particular the few industries not owned by multinationals are legally owned by the state. This does not alter the fact that a capitalist class exists which receives from the state a hefty share of the surplus value produced in these industries in the form of interest in its bank accounts and which participates, with its finance capital, in the speculations of international capital throughout the world. The Saudi sheikhs or the Algerian bourgeoisie are not the titular owners of the factories in their respective countries but, as shareholders in the multinationals, they participate in the exploitation of the international proletariat while, through the interest they reclaim, they in fact hold and direct the industries in their countries. Further, in many peripheral countries the capitalists who possess plant and agricultural estates (where pre-capitalist relations often exist) which produce monoculturally for export and from which they draw immense profits, do not even invest in the industrial production of their own countries (despite the mystificatory theories of "development") and instead participate in the international circuit of finance capital. In fact they invest in the banks and international financial institutions which in their turn operate in the field of industrial production where the returns are higher and where the field of choice is the entire planet. This "national bourgeoisie" is no more interested in leaving behind underdevelopment and the domination of imperialism than the American bourgeoisie. The differences between the bourgeoisie of a peripheral country and the metropolitan bourgeoisie arise from the division of surplus value and the possible heavy taxes which one has to pay to the other in order to deposit its share of the spoils in the bank. Such differences and possible eventual conflicts don't affect, and never will affect, the relations of exploitation between labour and capital. On the contrary, they both defend these against the dangerous presence of the proletariat.

The peripheral nature of these countries implies a peripheral character of the respective bourgeoisies in relation to the metropolitan capital concentrations. This results in a sort of subordination of one to the other and therefore in a natural tendency for each bourgeoisie to redefine its own position by modifying or reversing roles. Even so, these roles always involve exploitation of the proletariat.

Up to the 2nd World War the major imperialist centres were in Europe (Great Britain, France and Germany). It was the friction amongst them which sparked off world conflagration. The result of the war was that the centres round which imperialism's interests gravitate were shifted. It was around the two major victors (USA and USSR) that the present network was established, linking every country, every market and every national bourgeoisie to one another by thousands of threads in a single bloc of interests. By virtue of its previously accumulated economic power, its role as

the reconstructor of the Western economy after the war (thus re-establishing the network of commercial and industrial relations round itself), the USA rose from being a strong country, but not yet "the strongest", to become the lynchpin of the Western economy which set itself up to dominate the world against its rival - Russia. In the same way Russia also benefitted from the war through the area which it dominates. The relationship which existed between the European and US bourgeoisies between the wars is now reversed. But this hasn't changed an iota of their relationship to the proletariat of their respective countries or internationally. The difference in relations amongst these bourgeoisies and between the bourgeoisies of peripheral countries and metropolitan ones is purely quantitative. The Bolivian bourgeoisie for example, is much more a tributary of the USA than the European bourgeoisie. But this doesn't alter the fact that the Bolivian bourgeoisie is just as interested in capitalism's survival as the American bourgeoisie. And to be for capital's survival can only mean, in the imperialist era of capitalism, to be for the survival of imperialist relations as such throughout the world. The Bolivian bourgeoisie, independently of imperialist US capital, looks for the path of progress towards a higher place for itself in the world hierarchy and as such it is neither interested in the Bolivian nor the international proletariat which it fights against.

8. Sections of the "national bourgeoisie" which, because of their own particular economic weakness as a result of many different factors, are still not directly involved in capitalist international circles, or rather still do not directly participate in the joint exploitation of the international proletariat, often demand their own place at the share-out table. Such demands can also assume the form of opposition to the relationship of political and economic domination which metropolitan capital institutes over their countries. But this opposition cannot in any sense be confused with the historical antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Neither can it in any way be utilised in the form of a class alliance in the struggle of the proletariat against capital and its imperialist centres. In a war between two sides the discord and friction on one front can be utilised by the opposing front; but this doesn't mean an alliance, no matter how temporary, between one front and a section of the other. Thus the internal differences amongst the world bourgeoisie can ease the struggle of the proletariat - in the sense of a relative weakening of the enemy in certain historical conjunctures. But only counter-revolutionary opportunists can think that the proletariat's tactic can consist of an alliance with one part in order to defeat the whole of the class enemy. Such "tactics" are none other than the enslavement of the proletariat to the interests of a section of the bourgeoisie; they are part of the capitalist mode of production's whole dynamic of strengthening itself and self-preservation.

In this respect the events in Nicaragua are symbolic. In this country the highest ranks of the bourgeoisie were tightly aligned to the American imperialist centre and perfectly integrated into its mechanisms of domination in Nicaragua and its bandit-style exploitation in the world as a whole. (The fat accounts in US banks play an equal part with all the others in the extortionate speculations of world finance capital.) On the other hand, large

sections of the petty bourgeoisie: entrepreneurs, artisans, intellectuals, were living in conditions of subordination to American imperialist capital, to which they were paying heavy tribute in the form of interest on private and state credits. To give a picture of what the situation was like it's enough to mention that 50% of cement shares in Nicaragua, the matchstick monopoly [Momotombol], the majority of timber-mills, 51 cattle ranches, 46 coffee plantations, Managua's milk pasteurisation plant, and many other properties, were all in the hands of the Somoza family. It was thus natural that the Nicaraguan petty bourgeoisie should feel oppressed and that its own entrepreneurial designs were being suffocated by the enormous power of the small family which was tied by a double thread to North American capital. Thus it worked to free itself from one in order to increase the grip of the other. At first the Sandinista movement enjoyed the support of all sections of the petty and middle bourgeoisie against the enormous power of Somoza and thus it was able to take power. But in order to do what? - In order to attempt an impossible reconstruction of the economy which would inject new life into the national development of investments and production. Such reconstruction or development is now precluded without the intervention of financial credit and technical apparatus from the metropolitan centres. The initial attempt to turn towards the USSR failed, due to the objective difficulty for the Soviet Union of intervening in the area and the danger of a direct clash with the USA. Support from Cuba was not a serious alternative, given the state of indebtedness of the island and its own position as a vassal of the USSR. Thus the Sandinista's policies couldn't maintain the support of the traditional parties in which the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie are divided (liberals and conservative). From here began first disaffection, then direct opposition to the government and guerrillas supported by the USA. The more recent attempts to re-engage the North American giant in a "dialogue" also stem from this situation. For the proletariat, yet again, only blood and tears can follow. The force of the rebellion against appalling living and working conditions and against a ferociously oppressive regime led the proletariat to support, first the movement, and then the Sandinista government. But it has been led to support the interests and programme of a fraction of the bourgeoisie (even if numerically its majority fraction) against the other by shedding its own blood. Thus, for the reasons already given, it also has been objectively led to serve the interests of one of the imperialist fronts - the Russian - against the other. Imperialism, or rather the state of capitalist relations in their final global period, has not even been scratched; neither has anything changed in the productive relations between the classes in Nicaragua.

9. Thus, in the imperialist epoch proletarian tactics absolutely exclude any sort of alliance, however temporary, with any bourgeois fraction. A proletarian policy does not recognise any of them as "progressive" or anti-imperialist, arguments which have been used at various times to justify united front tactics. In the Theses of the 2nd Congress of the Third International, even while they state:

"...the Communist International's entire policy on the national and colonial questions should rest primarily on a closer union of proletarians and the working masses of all

nations and countries for a joint revolutionary struggle to overthrow the landowners and the bourgeoisie" [Thesis 4]

When they come to the reciprocal relations between the CI and the revolutionary movement in backward and dominated countries, state:

"In order to defeat foreign capital, the first step towards revolution in the colonies, the co-operation of bourgeois nationalist revolutionary elements, is useful."

[Theses on the National and Colonial Questions - 2nd Congress of the Communist International, 28th July, 1920]

With this - as is universally acknowledged by all those currents who in one way or another bases themselves on the 3rd International, the theses clearly affirm the necessity of a proletarian alliance or collaboration with bourgeois revolutionary national forces. It was Lenin who clarified the thinking behind the Theses in the Congress itself. First:

"The notion of the distinction, of the division between oppressed and oppressing peoples inspired all our theses..."

Second:

"The second guiding idea behind our theses is the following: In the present international situation, after the imperialist war, the relations between peoples, the entire world system of states, are determined by the struggle of a small group of imperialist nations against the soviet movement and against the soviet states, at the head of which is soviet Russia. If we were to lose sight of this fact we would not be able to correctly pose any national or colonial question."

Third:

"The question of the bourgeois democratic movement in backward countries. It is precisely this problem which has led to some disagreements. We discussed whether or not it is theoretically correct, on the level of principle, that the International and its communist parties should support the bourgeois democratic movement in backward countries. As a result of this discussion we have unanimously decided not to speak of "bourgeois democratic" movements, but of national revolutionary movements." [Report of the Commission of the National and Colonial Questions]

The first "guiding idea" is a response to propagandistic criteria, certainly valid in itself but which, however, does not provide a basis for analysing and clarifying specific relations between countries. The second "guiding idea", on the other hand, is the central one which, in the way it is formulated by Lenin, allows us to understand the whole spirit of the theses, despite the fact that that this leaves the central problems essentially unresolved. In fact, in the same speech, Lenin clarified the perspective:

"if the victorious proletariat propagandises methodically, and the soviet governments come to their aid with all the means

at their disposal, it is mistaken to suppose that the capitalist stage of development is inevitable for such peoples. In all the colonies and in all the backward countries we must not only create autonomous fighting cadres, party organisations, we must not only spread propaganda for the creation of peasant soviets and get used to adapting it to pre-capitalist conditions, no, the Communist International, must also establish and theoretically develop the thesis that the backward countries, with the help of the proletariat of the advanced countries, can pass to the soviet system and, through definite stages of development, arrive at communism, [thus] jumping the capitalist period.

The International neither established nor theoretically developed such a thesis, but it is obvious that the spirit behind the thinking of the 2nd Congress was to get national liberation movements to join together on the side of the Russian workers' state and the International as part of an overall strategy (including economic and political support, etc). This would not only keep them detached from the orbit of world imperialism but also aimed at their future development towards socialism. The very fact of being helped economically by the State of the proletarian dictatorship (soviet Russia and other potentially revolutionary advanced states) and therefore materially supported in their struggle against imperialism, could have made them real anti-imperialist forces in the global strategy of international socialist revolution. However, what Lenin maintained is very true, i.e. that outside of the clear existence of soviet Russia struggling against the capitalist states, one cannot "correctly pose any national question". At any rate, it is certainly impossible to predict what the International's final positions were to become from this Congress. It shouldn't be forgotten that at the time of the Second Congress of the International there was absolute faith in the imminence of the proletarian revolution, at least in Europe. And it was this faith, soon to be bitterly shattered, that inspired in Lenin the extreme tactic of admitting temporary alliances with the national bourgeoisie in the struggle against the European capitalist states. Providing extra forces during the frontal attack on Western capitalism, they would soon become feeble opponents of the international march towards socialism and any "jumping of the capitalist stage" in the backward countries.

Faith in the imminent European revolution and Lenin's bold tactical plan thus coherently explain the third "guiding idea" of the Congress theses. In fact at the Second Congress the Commission's discussions [on the national and colonial questions - trans.] on Lenin's theses and those of the Indian, Roy (who insisted on the distinction between the bourgeois national democratic movement and "the struggle of the landless peasantry against every form of exploitation") was artificially resolved by the Commission's report. Following the discussion, it was Lenin himself who said "we have decided not to speak of bourgeois democratic movements but of national revolutionary movements". Lenin implicitly recognised in the same speech that perhaps it was not correct "in principle for the International and its parties to support bourgeois democratic movements". But the "unanimously" recognised urgency

was to somehow link these movements up to the revolutionary process which everyone believed was growing in the advanced countries. Lenin himself asked for further theoretical study of the issue in the future work of the International. However, there was no international revolution. The Soviet Union developed nationalist policies on the basis of state capitalism and bent its international policies and those of the Communist International to its own interests. The 3rd Congress practically ignored the question. The 4th, on the other hand, began to consolidate the worst parts of the ambiguous theses of the 2nd Congress, leading to the Chinese tragedy, the dogmatism of "Leninism" and support for any national movement which was in any way useful to Russian interests. What began as a weak theory, as an ambiguous political perspective, became transformed into a theory of support for a policy of preserving imperialism. Yet the problem posed remained theoretically unresolved: In the epoch of imperialism and in countries where capitalism is "imported", can the "national bourgeoisie" play a revolutionary role which can somehow be included in the revolutionary strategy of the international proletariat? In practice the answer to such a query was an opportunist "yes", in outright contempt for the more valid Leninist theses on imperialism [Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism]. These theses in fact are saying "no". The national bourgeoisie of the "backward countries" is such because it is linked by a thousand threads to the imperialist centres and to their world financial, industrial and political operations. Therefore its growth can only take place within the overall imperialist dynamic, not against it. Its conflicts with this or that front, with this or that imperialist country, are not class conflicts but are inside the capitalist dynamic and consistent with its logic. "National revolutions" are therefore destined to finish up on the terrain of inter-imperialist equilibrium, with the approval of capitalist states and governments and linked to one or the other imperialist bloc. And in fact Russia is today one of the imperialist centres.

10. The internationalist communist forces consider as immediate enemies those bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces who, in the name of progress, economic development or political democracy, preach and seek to practice an alliance of classes between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie and consequently advocate social peace and the postponement of the proletarian class struggle. We therefore reject any form of alliance or united front, however temporary, in order to reach a hypothetical intermediate phase between the present situation of capitalist domination and the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the case of movements which give way to so-called "new democratic" or "revolutionary democratic" regimes and governments, the internationalists will put forward the true communist programme and play a genuine revolutionary role.

There are currents who, whilst protesting that they are against the sort of Leninism we have just examined, maintain the need to support the "revolutionary" fringes of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie in order to construct an intermediary form of state between the bourgeois democratic state and the dictatorship of the proletariat. They justify such opportunist tendencies with the theory that the proletariat would not be ready, by virtue of its subjective stage of development and the existing balance of class

forces, to play an autonomous, revolutionary role with a class dictatorship. Our current has already had occasion to criticise and reject these positions with the forces which went on to form the Communist Party of Iran [CPIran] and then with the Party itself. [See the documents of the IVth International Conference, the articles in Battaglia Comunista, Prometeo, Workers Voice, Revolutionary Perspectives, Communist Review dedicated to the discussions with the Iranian comrades, some of which have been translated and published in Farsi.] Here we will repeat only the essential outline of the internationalist argument.

a) The proletariat's present hypothetical unreadiness for its historical role does not justify an alliance of the political vanguard with bourgeois forces, since such an alliance not only does not facilitate, but directly obstructs the proletariat's revolutionary development.

b) If a state which has emerged from social movements and insurrections is not the proletarian dictatorship it must be a bourgeois state. Such a state would not allow improvements in the living standards of the proletariat except to avoid internal social tensions, but even then it would demand in return an end to class struggle in order to guarantee continued levels of production with big enough returns for individual firms and the economy as a whole to ensure the survival of the country in the capitalist world market. Such a policy is unambiguously against the interests of both the national and the international working class and all the political tendencies involved in the administration and direction of this state would be responsible for it. Even the most radical forces of the "left" of this regime would be concerned with guaranteeing social peace in the name of the democratic "gains" which this state would stand for. And with that such tendencies would have put themselves on the other side of the class divide.

c) If the proletariat is still too "immature" to act autonomously any alliance with the "democratic" or "revolutionary" fringes of the bourgeoisie means subordination to that bourgeoisie. In other words, it is impossible for any existing proletarian tendency to influence this "intermediate" regime without abandoning revolutionary political tasks and thus betraying its class. Either the proletariat is strong and makes its own revolution or it is, objectively and subjectively, still weak. In this case its political organisations work to strengthen it in the class struggle against the bourgeois state, whatever form it takes.

d) The opposing position, which maintains that proletarian political organisations can develop revolutionary conditions within the bourgeois state forms takes us back to the gradualist, essentially reformist formulations of the Second International and to the worst national-communism. It doesn't matter how many revolutionary words or phrases are uttered, the organisations which today uphold these ideas are today opportunist forces which the real test of the living revolutionary movement in the peripheral countries will reveal as counter-revolutionary.

The main task of international communist organisations is the political and organisational preparation for the class' assault

on capitalism, on a national scale in each country where they operate. But this is founded on a strategy in which only the international proletariat is seen to be capable of overthrowing capitalist domination and building a socialist society. They cannot therefore envisage a tactical plan which doesn't take into account the balance of class forces or one which conceives of 'intermediate' stages in a revolutionary process towards the dictatorship of the proletariat. In an internationally unfavourable situation, the only 'intermediate' stage (which is, however, permanent) is the class struggle. But there will be no shortage of more favourable conditions in the international balance of class forces. Then, an armed proletarian tendency will be forced to adopt direct tactics of attack in order to install a proletarian dictatorship when it takes on the bourgeoisie and its apparatus of imperialist domination.

11. Maintaining proletarian autonomy in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat by rejecting alliances with liberal democratic forces of the bourgeoisie doesn't mean ignoring or undervaluing the demands for liberty or democracy which all strata in the peripheral countries raise. The common characteristic of peripheral countries under different forms of capitalist domination is brutal oppression. Here capital maintains its power through the denial of those liberties which the capitalist mode of production itself was founded upon. In the heartlands of capitalism demands for elementary freedoms (of speech, press, organisation) and of more democratic forms of life arose naturally from the process of social existence and they are thus considered as natural rights.

Marxists, as distinct from petty bourgeois radicals, distinguish social movements for freedom and democracy from the liberal-democratic forces which use these movements for the preservation of capitalism. For example, the mass movement for racial equality in South Africa isn't due to the bourgeois-democratic forces which have controlled them until now. In fact it is just the opposite. The strength and ability of the bourgeois-democratic political tendencies there is due to the existence of a genuine mass movement which expresses itself spontaneously against racial oppression. It is not communist politics to ignore this basic truth and condemn not only the political leadership but the entire social movement and its demands.

Communists cannot ignore the immediate demands which the proletariat of the peripheral countries raise when reacting to their material conditions, just as they cannot ignore immediate economic demands of the proletariat in the metropolitan countries with the excuse that these aren't in themselves opposed to the capitalist mode of production. Just as the workers' demands, though intrinsically trade unionist in character, are the material basis which make revolutionary developments possible, so any material struggle produced by the real conditions of civil and social existence in the peripheral countries can, and must, be the terrain of intervention and political struggle for revolutionary tendencies. The 'political' nature of demands for freedom in the mass movements of the peripheral countries does not mean democratic political aims have to be written into the communist programme. This would be to take the content of the communist programme backwards and to fall

once more into the opportunist policies condemned above. But neither does this mean that the proletariat's political party has to ignore them by omitting them from its own tactics. Demands for freedom and democracy have to be taken into account when defining the tactics and slogans for generalising and radicalising the economic struggle so that the penetration and development of a genuinely communist programme within the proletarian and dispossessed masses can become a material possibility.

Freedom of movement, racial equality, liberty of thought and a free press are not communist objectives. They are in themselves bourgeois democratic objectives, but communists never fail to denounce the absence of such freedoms and support demands for them. This is linked to the denunciation of capitalism's denial of such freedoms and to propaganda for the need to overthrow capitalism in order that the exploited masses can be assured of them. Therefore:

12. International communists in the peripheral countries do not put in their programme that their aim is a regime which guarantees basic freedoms and the forms of democratic life. Their aim is the dictatorship of the proletariat which goes beyond bourgeois liberty in giving to the proletariat, organised in workers' councils, the task of the emancipation of the entire society from the chains of capital. They will make themselves the firmest and most consistent defenders of those liberties, unmasking bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces which agitate for them whilst preparing to deny them as soon as a bourgeois-democratic regime [acting in the interests of the capitalist domination of the advanced countries] is achieved.

Iran and Nicaragua demonstrate the results of the democratist and liberaloid chatter of bourgeois nationalist forces. In both cases the forces now in power used liberal and democratic programmes against the former dictatorships of Somoza and the Shah in order to create bourgeois regimes which have immediately denied the liberties they promised - especially the right of the proletariat to defend its interests against capital. This was inevitable since, to get themselves on their feet economically, these regimes had to continue squeezing the proletariat and maintaining the poverty of the remainder of the oppressed masses. What capital would they be able to use if they discouraged investment by increasing wages and instituted tolerable and safe working conditions? What dollars would they be able to use to run their states unless the relationship of exchange between agriculture and industry continued on the basis of starvation wages for agricultural labourers and yet more hunger for the peasantry? What means could they use to guarantee all this other than political oppression and repression? The bourgeoisie itself, by the necessity for it to remain in the world market, denies and will always deny in practice the democratic programme of the nationalist bourgeoisie. Whilst communist forces demand the basic freedoms denied by the regimes of the peripheral countries, they do not promise lists of rights to follow the installation of "revolutionary democracy", "new democracies", or whatever other formula the bourgeois state hides behind. Nor do they promise a "socialism" in which the state, instead of being the centralised organisation of the armed class, appropriates the means of production only so that it can

continue administering them on private capitalist lines within the imperialist world market.

Internationalist communists propagandise and disseminate the revolutionary programme within the proletariat, showing that it alone can save the proletariat and the oppressed masses from hunger, poverty and oppression.

12. a) Since the creation of a national state can only come about under the aegis and with the support of the imperialist blocs, in practice it neither undermines the basis nor changes the relations of forces with the international proletariat. On the contrary, the unification of the masses under the nationalist banner and behind the nationalist political leaders, themselves allied to one or other of the imperialist centres, reinforces imperialist domination by taking away whole national sections of the proletarian class from their role of opposition to capital. This is all the more true when every aspect of the mass movement becomes subordinated to nationalist ends, leaving no opportunity or rights to the proletariat to struggle against the capitalists and immediate bourgeois exploitation.

b) Within the confines of imperialist competition for the division of the world into zones of economic and political influence the creation of another national state (it doesn't matter how democratic this is) favours the old regime's rival states. If a peripheral country leaves one bloc it strengthens the opposing bloc, which will admit the new state into its own orbit. This is what has happened in recent decades in the Far East, Africa and in South America. It is a warning to the internationalists of today and to the "revolutionaries" of yesterday who are now retracing in Palestine the steps followed by the "Leftists" in Vietnam or Cuba.

13. Thus communist organisations in countries where the "national problem" still exists cannot use nationalist demands in their tactics of agitation and propaganda. Instead their slogans and directives for the struggle must take up the fundamental problems which are connected to the material conditions of the oppressed masses and which the bourgeois nationalist forces utilise for their counter-revolutionary ends. To the proletariat and dispossessed, for whom foreign occupation appears to be the cause of all their ills, communists will not call for conquering the national state but rather for winning more humane living and working conditions, for class solidarity with the proletariat of all countries, as a step towards the common objective of the dictatorship of the proletariat and international socialism.

The Palestinian question was definitely a stumbling block for yesterday's ambiguous revolutionaries. Now they have fallen into a more classical opportunist swamp. The groups and currents who abandoned internationalism to support bourgeois nationalism saw the central problem in Palestine as the re-establishment of a Palestinian national state and they subordinated their tactics, slogans and alliances to this end. According to their idealist mentality it seemed that the European workers' active solidarity with the dispersed and dispossessed Palestinian masses in their struggle against the economic, political and military activities

of the Western states, also had to mean support for the nationalist programmes of the leading Palestinian organisations (apart from ambiguous criticisms of the latter's approach). Thus they made "the destruction of the Israeli state" as an irreducible aim of the communist struggle in the region. A Marxist examination of the facts, of the existing political organisations and tendencies, shows rather that:

a) The formation of an independent Palestinian state presupposes the existence of independent economic and financial forces. Leaving aside the financial fortunes of the Palestinian bourgeoisie, such forces do not exist. Consider, for example, the need for an industrial apparatus and the associated technology in a geographical and social situation like Palestine. The bourgeoisie would thus look to those who had these things at their disposal - i.e. one or other of the imperialist camps. The impossibility of autonomy and the subservience to one or the other imperialist bloc stems from this.

b) The destruction of the Israeli state isn't possible without the destruction of the inter-imperialist balance of power which would result from direct intervention by the USSR and lead directly to the 3rd World War. (The possibility of this beginning in that area and from just such an initiative cannot be ruled out.)

c) Therefore such a tactic is subordinated, not to the revolutionary strategy of the proletariat, but rather to capital's self-preservation and the dynamic of inter-imperialist conflict which is leading towards a third global conflict.

d) Thus it is rather the necessary and potential struggles of the Palestinian proletariat - dispersed as they are throughout the Arab world - which are being subordinated to this "tactic", in the sense that their struggles are aimed at achieving the same objective as the Arab states whose interests are against Zionist expansion. These states are very glad to avoid workers' struggles inside their own borders although these often result from the Palestinian presence - from a situation, that is, of desperation and revolt.

e) Such a "tactic" therefore, whilst denying the possibility of proletarian tendencies emerging in the battle of the Palestinian masses against capitalism and of revolutionaries linking these up to similar tendencies inside the Israeli proletariat (which is oppressed by the economic weight of the world crisis and the state of permanent war), subordinates the fighting capacity of the Palestinian masses to the micro-imperialist interests and the struggle for regional hegemony of the Arab states and their respective bourgeoisies.

f) On the other hand, it is not only a possible but an essential task for internationalist communists to fight the poverty and super-exploitation of the Palestinians and to direct the struggles against the real culprit: the capitalist mode of production in its imperialist and decadent period. In the various Arab countries, as in Israel itself, the Palestinians experience the most dramatic conditions of exploitation and oppression imposed by capital in any of its national forms. The undoubted outlaw nature of the

State of Israel, artificially created by Western imperialism at the end of the 2nd World War, doesn't mean it is composed of a single class. Even in Israel the Palestinian proletariat experiences increasing exploitation and oppression in proportion to the growing international crisis. The struggles of the Israeli proletariat (whether Arab or not) and the struggles of the immigrant Palestinian workers in the neighbouring Arab states are the struggles of the same class against the same bourgeois class. The vanguard of the class can and must build revolutionary political unity from this underlying material unity in order to lead the whole of the proletarian masses against capital and its states. It was the threat of such unity that King Hussain wanted to avert with the massacre of Black September. It is the threat of such unity which all the Arab states want to avoid when they drown in blood the unrest and uprisings of the proletariat against the miserable conditions in which they are forced to exist.

To those who might accuse these positions of being social-chauvinist, Euro-centrist, or similar lies, we remind them that communists do not for a moment cease struggling against their own bourgeoisie and its imperialist activities in the world. But the struggle against the metropolitan bourgeoisie and its manoeuvres, the denunciation of and opposition to political and military operations against oppressed nationalities must never involve solidarity with nationalist currents. The very people who ramble on about "tactical diversity" so as to solidarise with nationalist Palestinian movements and the PLO, don't understand the real meaning of tactical diversity. Their diversity becomes a diversity of strategies, or rather opportunist confusionism. Communist strategy on the other hand is the same everywhere: to destroy capitalism, install the dictatorship of the proletariat and build socialism. Their tactics vary because the material conditions in which they struggle and the balance of class forces vary. In the metropolitan countries opposition to their own bourgeoisie doesn't mean no opposition to its imperialist activities; just as opposition to their own bourgeoisie in the peripheral countries doesn't mean no opposition to the nationalist goals to which the ruling class wants to subordinate the proletariat. Internationalist communists in Italy or Britain are just as much against expeditions to Lebanon as Lebanese internationalists. Neither European nor Arab internationalists aim to destroy the Israeli state in order to set up a Palestinian state. But the European communists will try to prevent the metropolitan bourgeoisie from using arms to pursue its imperialist interests. The Arab internationalists on their part must try to prevent the local bourgeoisie making use of Western arms to control its internal affairs, to denounce such manoeuvres, therefore, in order to turn the struggle against the whole bourgeoisie by starting from immediate class demands and avoiding direct involvement in inter-bourgeois wars. In particular, it will be the task of the internationalists to define the course of agitation, intervention and struggle from which armed struggle against one or other bourgeois presence cannot be excluded. But what is certain is that these tactics will not revolve round the conquest of the Palestinian state, to the benefit of the rich bourgeoisie of the PLO, but to the strengthening of the proletariat, its complete class autonomy, against the rule of capital in all its forms: for communism.

Internationalist Communist Party (Battaglia Comunista)

Correspondence with Communists in India

Readers of Workers Voice in Britain and Battaglia Comunista in Italy will be aware of the International Bureau's efforts over the past year or more to engage an ex-Maoist group in India - RPP [Revolutionary Proletarian Platform] in political debate and the recent split of comrades in Bengal on the basis of the IBRP's platform. (See, for example the International Report in Workers Voice #24.)

RPP's response to our initial approach (in September 1984) was positive and enthusiastic and while they announced that:

"Broadly we are in agreement with most of your positions and would like to know more about you ..." [RPP to IBRP 23.9.84]

we on our part recognised that the draft policy statement and political analyses of this organisation in political transition showed its potential for further development towards more coherent revolutionary positions. Thus, for example, we acknowledged in our press RPP's advance over those who advocate a strategy of "democratic revolution" in capitalism's backward areas by their recognition that a Marxist perspective means that socialist revolution and the defeat of one's own bourgeoisie is the only strategy for revolutionaries everywhere today.

At the same time, however, the dialogue remained essentially one-sided. Despite our mutual recognition of a substantial area of political agreement and RPP's publication of the CWO's article [from WV#17] "Class Consciousness and Councilist Confusions, or Who Will Educate the ICC?" (presumably as part of the political battle against his tendency's supporters in India), RPP never managed to develop a response to the first major area of difference between us: the question of trades unions and parliamentarism. [See their letter of 15.4.85] This was not through lack of desire to reply. On the contrary, RPP's letters expressed their intention to provide a more developed response "after the

next CC meeting" on various occasions. While it became obvious that RPP were having difficulty doing this, their analysis of the British miners' strike in the pages of their journal, Proletarian Emancipation, demanded a response from the IBRP. Our letter and a subsequent one raising points on the question of parliamentarism [10.4.85 and 9.5.85] have not been replied to by RPP as a whole. Instead the organisation has split under the strain of trying to contain divergent political tendencies without confronting the problem of its basic political method and framework.

In fact the IBRP's arguments on how communists today should relate to trades unions and parliament opened up the whole problem of the nature of the present period and with it the tasks of communists and the underlying issue of marxist method. Unfortunately, as the correspondence from Lal Pataka makes clear, the problem was not aired outside the Central Committee, nor did the majority of this Committee see fit to face up to and discuss the wider issues. Although an eclectic grouping in political transition, with a draft platform which they stated:

"... may be suitably changed and improved through discussions and analysis of the objective material condition prevailing in India and the world at large ...[page 2]

the organisation as a whole has refused to face up to the political and organisational implications of completing the break with the counter-revolution. Rather than allow the area of agreement with Left Communist politics to serve as the basis for developing greater political coherence, RPP tried to retrench on the basis of eclecticism. The result was inevitable: the splintering of the organisation itself. While the International Bureau waited for the long-promised letter on trades unions Proletarian Emancipation appeared after a four-month gap with retrograde concessions on the national question (arguing in "Opportunist Deviations on the Question of Self-Determination of Nations" that communists in "dominated" areas have the duty to support "national liberation struggles"). Unbeknown to us RPP's Central Committee was divided about how to relate to the IBRP in general and about their reply on trades unions and parliamentarism in particular. The Bureau's politics had gained a hearing from RPP's section in Bengal and the comrades there were

already publishing IBRP articles in their paper Lal Pataka [Red Flag]. Inside the Central Committee the Lal Pataka delegate was arguing that RPP should clarify its whole method and political basis; that it should accept not only the IBRP's arguments on trades unions but the wider political framework that this implies: in short, that the organisation should reorient itself along coherent marxist lines and produce a completely new platform consistent with the International Bureau's principles of adherence. Thus in August we received Lal Pataka's "Open Letter to RPP Members" accompanied by a letter explaining the comrades' political affinity with the Bureau's positions and announcing their intention to develop closer links with the IBRP.

No sooner had we welcomed Lal Pataka's intention to work along the political lines of the Bureau than we received a further text from ex-RPP comrades in Nagpur announcing their resignation from the organisation and arguing politically for the strategy of the "democratic revolution" in capitalism's "dominated" areas. (Unfortunately we are unable to publish this and our reply here, as we had intended, due to shortage of space in the present issue.)

Meanwhile we have heard nothing from the RPP itself apart from receiving the long-awaited finalised version of their platform [dated August 1984]. Much less than an advance on their initial draft policy statement, this final edition represents a step back in that it fails even to deal with many of the basic questions which any coherent revolutionary organisation must take a position on. Thus the national question is not even mentioned while the comrades' previous clarity that the first task of communists everywhere is to defeat their own bourgeoisie is noticeably absent.

RPP is in the process of disintegration but in India today we can say that a proletarian political camp has come into existence (not only from ex-RPP forces). Within this camp numerous fractions and tendencies are emerging and debating political issues familiar to Left Communists in Europe. The onus is now on the International Bureau itself to win as many of these comrades as possible away from eclecticism and convince them of the validity of our platform in order that they can contribute to the building of a revolution-

any organisation in india and to the development of the international party and programme of the proletariat. In this we have no better ally than Lal Pataka whose letters published amongst those here clearly show that the comrades understand what is at stake.

We are publishing here a substantial part of the IBRP correspondence with RPP and ex-RPP comrades in the knowledge that the significance of the issues which the comrades are debating extends beyond india to Marxists everywhere who are seeking to re-establish the revolutionary programme and organisation.

International Bureau to RPP: 10.4.85

Dear Comrades,

It is some time since we heard from you. We hope you received our letter of 17.2.85. ... Enclosed with this letter is a copy of the CWO's latest leaflet produced and distributed in Britain in the immediate aftermath of the miners' strike. Revolutionary Perspectives #22 contains a fuller analysis of the strike while the IBRP has synthesised its analysis in a set of theses which are published in Communist Review #2.

The issue of the British miners' strike highlights a critical area of difference between the IBRP and RPP - i.e. the nature and role of the trades unions and the tactics to adopt accordingly. Although we cannot go into a full analysis here (for this we hope you will consult RP#20: "Marxism and the Trade Union Question" and WV#16: "Trades Unions and Workers' Struggles: Theses of the Vth Congress of the PCInt") we would like to begin a deeper political exchange by commenting on the analysis of the trades unions which you put forward in Proletarian Emancipation and which underpins your article on the British miners' strike in PE#4/5.

Central to your explanation for the failure of the NUM to spread the strike to the rest of the working class is the concept of a bureaucratic leadership whose anti-democratic conduct of the struggle "undermined the support of the rest of the trade union movement" [page 1] and who, for reasons unspecified, intended to "exhaust the miners in a prolonged struggle into an abject surrender and defeat" [ibid]. Having characterised bureaucracy as the basis of the NUM's containing role in the struggle is it not surprising that you fall into the trap of criticising the union leadership for "calling the strike without a national ballot" in keeping with Thatcher and Trotskyist organisations like the so-called RCP [Revolutionary Communist Party] here.

We say this is a trap not just because right-wing and left-wing enemies of the working class came up with the same "criticism";

not just because the option of a national ballot before the strike was in practice denied the NUM (since the strike broke out without the authority of the union leaders); not just because the ballot is a favourite tool of union leaders to undermine class solidarity and delay strike action (based as it is on individual workers); but also because the reasoning behind such a criticism is that the trades unions can be transformed into organisations for a real defence of workers' interests if only the bureaucratic leaders are ousted and replaced with revolutionary leaders. But comrades, isn't this a superficial explanation for why trades unions everywhere today militate against the working class; for why they always act to contain the class struggle and limit its potential? This is so whether we are looking at entrenched bureaucratic unions which have become integrated into the state (as in Western Europe); whether we are looking at unions which have been outlawed by the state (as in Turkey); whether we are looking at narrow craft unions or industry-wide unions (both of which exist in Europe); whether we are looking at unions linked to specific bourgeois parties (as is apparently the case in India); or whether we are looking at unions which have developed out of a mass working class movement (as in Poland). We are convinced that the bureaucratic/labour aristocrats thesis is inaccurate and inadequate to explain the worldwide anti-working class role of the trades unions. For us the explanation lies elsewhere - in the very nature of the trades unions whose existence is based on negotiating the terms of sale for workers' labour power. Behind this very simple, even obvious for Marxists, statement of the function of the trades unions lies the material explanation for their inevitable role in practice as curtailers and derailleurs of the class struggle onto safe ground for capitalism.

In capitalism's epoch of imperialism and decline trades unions - whose existence depends on the survival of the wage labour-capital relationship - find themselves defending the interests of capital against the interests of the working class because a real defence of workers' living standards and jobs poses an implicit and increasingly real threat to the capitalist system itself. We don't need to remind RPP of the invaluable role the trades unions played historically for capital in the last two imperialist wars by their overseeing of a "truce" in the class war and acceptance of the militarisation of labour and sacrifices literally to the death for imperialism. And the essence of such a reactionary defence of the national capital against the revolutionary, international interests of the working class exists already when the NUM conducts the struggle in terms of the "fight for [British] coal"; when the COB in Bolivia calls for an end to strikes now that a "democratic" government is in power; when Solidarity in Poland calls for calm in face of the prospect of the struggle developing into a more open and conscious one against the state and when it becomes the natural home of Catholic nationalist ideology. We repeat, the explanation of such phenomena must go deeper than the bureaucratic nature of the unions and a leadership which sets out to defeat the struggle from the start. It has to be sought in the nature of the historical period itself which has transformed trades unionism into a weapon for the conservation of capitalist relations at the cost of an effective defence of the economic interests of the class.

For us then, it follows that the trades unions are no longer the natural means for the working class to conduct an effective economic struggle. They are no longer a means for linking the revolutionary party to the mass of the working class, much less the "fundamental and primary organisations" of the class whose readiness to "struggle against all forms of exploitation, oppression and slavery existing in society" is essential before the class as a whole can embark on a revolutionary course [which is what you have argued in PE#4/5 in your reply to OSCPIA]. In fact, while the trades unions could and were used by revolutionaries in capitalism's progressive epoch as a means of linking the daily struggle to the fight for socialism, they have never been organs for revolutionary change as the RPP claims when it says in the 1981 Policy Statement[page 24]:

"The trade unions are inevitable natural class organisations of the workers and it is also an essential phenomenon under capitalism. It is extremely important as a means to organise the working class in its daily struggle and for the abolition of wage labour." [our emphasis]

Lenin well understood the limitations of trades unionism and it was an essential part of his fight against economism in Russian Social Democracy. Here the principle issue was to establish that the objective behind the party's strategy of developing roots in the economic struggle, i.e. in the daily life of the class, was not to lead this economic struggle to its "natural conclusion" but rather to politicise that struggle, to develop class consciousness beyond simply trade union consciousness by providing political leadership to the struggle. But it would be a fatal mistake of that political leadership to imagine that the struggle can be led towards a revolutionary course by means of the trades unions. Historically the class-wide organisations which have emerged in real revolutions as the basis for revolutionary change have been the workers' councils or soviets which have provided the basis for the operation of proletarian democracy and through which, in the Russian Revolution, the Bolshevik Party exercised its political leadership. Of course we know that we really do not have to tell you this. The point is, however, that it is through such mass, potentially revolutionary organs, that the unions that the revolutionary party will be able to establish itself as the legitimate leader of the mass of the exploited and working masses.

At this point we had better clarify what we mean to avoid your dismissing our arguments out of hand by amalgamating them with those of the ICC or even the OSCPIA (neither of which are the same, by the way). We are not arguing that since the trades unions are now anti-working class organisations it is therefore impossible for communists to take a leading part in the daily struggle without "watering down" their political programme. Nor do we deduce that the main task of revolutionaries today is to propagandise in abstract terms for the "generalisation of the struggle" or formalistically conclude that workers who are opposed to the trade union line must therefore be expressing a higher level of class consciousness than workers fighting militantly inside the trade union framework. (It was this line of argument that led the ICC to see the NUM scabs in Nottinghamshire as a positive feature in

one issue of World Revolution [76] only to retract it in the next.) Moreover, we do not believe that the communists will be in a position to gain a lead in the class-wide organs of the insurrection if they have not already established an organised political presence inside the class. In short, although we by no means agree with everything Lenin says in Left-Wing Communism..., one of the fundamental necessities he posed for successful revolution, that the party be able to "to link itself with, to keep in close touch with, and to a certain extent, if you like, to merge with the broadest masses of toilers - primarily with the proletariat ..." [page 7, Peking edition 1965] remains today. the starting point for confronting the problem is the recognition, with Lenin, that a revolutionary organisation worthy of the name must work where the masses are. When a large part of the working class remains trapped inside the trades unions this means that communists also have to work inside them - but in a different sense and with a different perspective to "establishing leadership over the unions" [PE//4/5p.8 in the Reply to OSCPIA] or of working for the formation of "one union in one industry and one nation-wide central trade union in place of the existing many under the leadership of the workers' themselves" [ibid: RPP's "Message of the 8th General Election in India]. It is not the task of communists to capture the leadership of organisations whose existence depends on the conservation of capital nor to absorb their energies in trying to reform existing unions or establish "better" ones in a futile attempt to make these the mass organs of an offensive struggle against capital. Rather, our task is to gain a hearing for the revolutionary programme amongst the masses and to organise communist nuclei in the workplaces and factories who, armed with the revolutionary programme, are in a position to give practical leadership to the daily struggle - i.e. to put forward concrete proposals for its extension and to explain the real issues which are at the heart of any struggle of the class today and which the trades unions will never accept as the terms of the struggle. Thus what we mean by working inside the unions is that we have to utilise any opportunity for influencing the workforce which attendance at meetings, strike assemblies, etc. called by the unions open up to us. Communists in such a position will be arguing implicitly and explicitly for the struggle to go beyond the unions because their task is to lead the struggle outside the capitalist framework.

To return to the British miners' strike, a consistent revolutionary policy was not to join the chorus of right and left-wing reactionaries demanding a "democratic" ballot from the NUM but to show how the union terms for the struggle which limited it to a miners' fight were not the real issue. That the real issue was the defence of the jobs and living standards of the whole working class; that an effective fight by the whole class demands their active participation through mass assemblies, the formation of factory committees with recallable delegates, etc. It is in this context that the framing of concrete demands to unify the struggle (which can't be done through the unions) is of vital importance for revolutionaries and the IBRP is currently engaged in a discussion about the appropriate kind of demands which can be usefully put forward by revolutionaries in struggles like the miners' strike. As Marxists we have to view the question of demands dialectically. Our aim in putting forward demands is to gain an influence amongst the masses

and eventually to lead the mass struggle. Without an existing presence and influence amongst the masses it is difficult for the, as yet, small voice of communists even to be heard. At the same time, however, it is through our ability to relate to the actual struggle of the class and to put forward practical alternatives to the trade unions' tactics that we will gain a larger hearing and the basis for establishing an organised foothold in the daily class struggle. In Italy the IBRP comrades of the PCInt have established such a foothold, not by organising within the framework of trades unionism, but by forming political groups of workers who are also party members as well as sympathisers of the party, openly linked to the party and working daily for a revolutionary perspective in opposition to the policies of the trades unions. [If you want more details on factory groups there is an article in RP/16]. This is a far more solid basis for gaining the confidence of the masses than becoming embroiled in trying to reform or capture the trades unions - organisations which, the more class conscious struggles become, the more widespread and the more political and revolutionary their aims, the more they will be by-passed organisationally by the working class and the more their policies will be recognised by the proletariat as opposed to its revolutionary interests. History has shown that the mass revolutionary organs of proletarian democracy and the future proletarian dictatorship do not emerge from the trades unions. While the revolutionary party has still the task of linking itself to the masses it has to forge its own means of organising on a political basis for this end.

We hope you will find this letter defines the discussion in a fruitful manner. For us it is a serious question which has been faced by European revolutionaries for over 60 years. It is true that unions regroup workers in their millions (and that is our interest in them). It is true that in this sense they are class organisations, but as we have indicated here, they operate in the interests of the ruling class in continuing the class struggle within capitalist terms. This reality was not obvious in Lenin's day and hence he advocated working inside the old unions to keep links with the masses. This manner of posing the question remains valid today but the strategy and tactics which derive from it have to be different. What RPP must ask itself is whether it is more valid to follow Lenin's words of 60 years ago or the spirit of his method in the face of a changed reality. As Lenin put it himself in 1915: "One cannot be a revolutionary Social-Democrat without participating according to one's powers in developing this theory [Marxism] and adapting it to changed conditions".

... We haven't yet received the new Proletarian Emancipation or the new Policy Statement (is this published yet?).

As mentioned in our last letter, a copy of correspondence will be sent to your Calcutta address.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Communist greetings,

IBRP

Dear Comrades,

Thanks for your letter dated 17.2.85. It is heartening though not unexpected that we are in general agreement on the question of the role of the revolutionary party/nucleus in relation to imperialist war and that the revolutionary forces within the bourgeois states at war and elsewhere should propagate the necessity of converting the imperialist war into civil war right from the beginning, irrespective of organisational considerations.

As far as our attitude to the positions of CPIran is concerned, you might have noted in PE#4-5 that we are not in agreement with them on the question of democratic revolution. We do not believe that a "Revolutionary Democratic Republic" of Iran can become a springboard for a socialist revolution; rather if such a republic is ever achieved within the framework of capitalism it has more possibility of becoming a springboard for the appearance of another bourgeois dictator very similar to the late Shah or the present Khomeini.

On the question of Kurdistan too, we not only condemn any united front with KDP, we believe that it is incorrect in principle on the part of the Kurdish unit of the CPIran to take a lead in demanding self-determination of Kurdistan. Rather it should expose the real intentions of the Kurdish bourgeoisie when it raises the demand. In our opinion it is the task of the Kurdish unit of CPIran (i.e. Komala) to emphasise the unity of the Kurdish and Iranian proletariat and even to create the conditions of direct class struggle against the Kurdish bourgeoisie and its party, the KDP through mass strikes, etc.

On the question of the relation between the party and the class, it seems there is complete agreement between us. We hope the publication by us of your polemics with the ICC on this question ("Who Will Educate the ICC?") is a sufficient proof of it.

However on the question of participation in reactionary trade unions and bourgeois parliaments it is difficult for us to be in agreement with you or any other trend who rejects such participation outright. Even though we recognise that your position on trade unions (which seems to have been taken over by CPIran in a slightly revised form) is much saner in comparison with the ICC (who consider trade unions to have been integrated into the bourgeois state and hence need only to be smashed), we feel that in essence it remains a critique of the Bolshevik Leninist approach to the question from an extremely 'Left Wing' standpoint, since it starts from the same theoretical premise as that of the ICC and similar trends. As far as we are concerned, we believe that a fetishist attitude with the forms of class organisations is harmful to the movement since it amounts to superficial a priorism and a negation of dialectics. Along with the development and sharpening of the class struggle, the proletariat would abandon all outdated forms of organisations (even trade unions), if they become obstacles in the path of development of class struggle and turn

into useless weapons of struggle and would adopt newer organisational forms. But this is possible only during revolutionary convulsions and mass upsurge of the proletariat. Till then, we should be able to infiltrate and utilise existing forms of organisations for communist activities, to the extent possible. Our presence within the trade unions today would facilitate their abandonment tomorrow, if and when they become an obstacle in the course of class struggle. The same is true about participation in bourgeois parliaments. Abstention from bourgeois parliaments cannot be made into a principle merely due to the practical difficulties today for the revolutionaries to get elected and use it as a tribune. Such 'principled' abstentions would only deprive us of the opportunity to facilitate the process of smashing this bourgeois organisation from within. In other words, on both these questions were in complete agreement with the theses of the 2nd Congress of the Third International and are in disagreement with their 'Left' critics who opposed them on principle at the Congress.

Your surprise at the brief statement on the assassination of Indira Gandhi is justified. In this regard we have to state only this: our journal being at the press when the assassination took place, we had space enough only for a brief statement. A detailed article was, however, published in our Hindi journal and leaflets were distributed showing precisely "where revolutionaries stand in relation to Gandhi, the Indian Government and the Congress Party as a whole". We regret our inability at the moment to make them available to you in English. ...

Hope to hear from you soon.

With communist greetings,

RPP

International Bureau to RPP: 9.5.85

Dear Comrades,

Thanks for your letter of 15th April ...

We too have been heartened by the extend of our agreement on the questions of the tasks of revolutionaries during imperialist war, party and class, and of course, the issues which we have debated in the past with the CPIran (or at least with their supporters in Europe). In fact the International Bureau's discussions with the OSCPIA and other Iranians from different political backgrounds are continuing in Europe, particularly in Italy where our comrades in the PCInt have published another text in Farsi (their letter to the OSCPIA) and are continuing to make further criticisms of the CPIran's Programme. In this context your own resolution on the question of turning imperialist war into civil war and your criticisms of the CPIran's concept of a Democratic Revolution are particularly welcome since they not only reinforce our criticisms but also emphasise the widespread international nature of the

debate and the fact that it is not only communists from Europe who are critical of the CPIran's clinging to outmoded schemas. Thus, the PCInt has published your 1984 Conference Resolution on war and revolutionary defeatism and a substantial extract from your letter to the OSCPIA in issue 3 of their paper [Battaglia Comunista], 1985.

We agree with you that the main area of difference between us centres round the question of trades unions and parliamentarism. Our latest letters have obviously crossed in the post so I won't dwell on the trades union here until you have a chance to reply to our previous letter.

However, we would like to briefly clarify here the IBRP's position on parliamentarism. For us the question is not one of erecting practical difficulties into a principle. As Marxists we recognise that the guiding principle for how we relate to parliament is that such institutions cannot be used by the proletariat as a means of revolutionary transformation (i.e. the lesson Marx drew from the experience of the Paris Commune). While it is true that historically our tendency originally defined itself as abstentionist, abstentionism as a principle was firmly abandoned at the 2nd Congress of the International. Today the IBRP Platform recognises the basic lesson that parliament cannot be utilised for revolutionary ends but the question of how much scope there is for revolutionary organisations to use parliamentary elections and so on as a revolutionary tribune remains open for discussion, with the PCInt seeing the possibility of opportunities for the utilisation of elections opening up in some areas in future [see, for example, the letter to comrade B in Workers Voice #21].

Nevertheless, there does seem to be a difference in approach between the IBRP as a whole and the RPP, stemming from our different interpretations of the consequences for working class organisations in capitalism's decadent epoch. It is no accident that today there are enormous practical difficulties against revolutionaries getting elected and using parliament as a tribune. The era of the mass working class party, gradually built up on the basis of a combination of reformism and winning over the masses to the long-term aim of revolution is passed. With it has passed the possibility of today's revolutionary organisations being in a position to use elections and parliament in the same day-to-day way as the old Social Democratic parties. and since Marxists understand that today there are no longer any progressive bourgeois parties (even if they act in the name of the working class), the question of tactical support for such organisations no longer arises (as the RPP's Policy Statement argues). As we said in our previous letter, revolutionaries today can't just take everything Lenin said (in this case Left-Wing Communism ...) and apply it like a religious dogma to changed historical circumstances.

On the other hand your letter contains a worrying concept which Lenin never held and that is that it is possible to smash "this bourgeois organisation from within". For us it is axiomatic that the proletariat can neither build up its power economically nor politically within the bourgeois state apparatus. Parliament will be smashed when the bourgeois state is smashed and this cannot be accomplished from within but only when the proletariat has estab-

lished its own alternative: the mass organs of the proletarian state and forcibly disarmed and dissolved the state institutions of the bourgeoisie.

We remain hopeful that out of these mutual criticisms a process of political clarification is beginning to develop and look forward to your replies. ...

Communist greetings,

IBRP

OPEN LETTER TO RPP MEMBERS: 8.7.85

Dear Comrades,

In the process of ideological class struggle, particularly within Revolutionary Proletarian Platform, we have gathered a lot of experiences of which the basic points are stated below along with our concrete proposition for the political criteria upon which our platform shall be restructured:

The Central Committee's majority faction is practising eclecticism in methodology and a closed-shop policy in organisational principles. Although declaring eloquently a breakaway from "all forms of pseudo-Marxist-Leninist trends, theories and theoreticians" (RPP's Constitution) in essence the CC faction is upholding almost all the tenets of vulgarised Marxism in the name of Marxism-Leninism.

The Constitution of the RPP states:

"4. Programme: The Platform shall endeavour:...

(iv) To expose the bourgeois democratic institutions and the bourgeois state along with their political subservients in India and elsewhere working under the labels of 'Nationalists', 'Democrats', 'Social-Democrats', 'Stalinists', 'Maoists' and 'Trotskyists'. [emphasis ours]

The majority faction pragmatically holds that "trades unionism is NOT a bourgeois democratic institution".

On the contrary, we hold with Lenin that "Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the course of their movement, the only choice is either bourgeois or socialist ideology. Hence to belittle socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree, strengthens bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology ... for the spontaneous working class movement is trades unionism ... and trades unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie." [What Is To Be Done?, emphasis ours]

Majoritarianism has engrossed the CC of RPP. Its lack of visual-

isation of the concrete phenomena in concrete perspective, complete lack of comprehension and conceptualisation of the new elements in the arena of decadent capitalism and state capitalism emanate from that preoccupation.

...

The 'faction' is preoccupied with the tendency to take everything Marx, Engels and Lenin said as sermons. They are more interested in what our teachers said rather than how, why and when they said so. They are most loyal to the scriptures of the leaders, but least to their dialectical vision - which only has the power of illuminating all the remotest and dark corners of the historical tendencies, all the laws of motion of the epoch not only in abstract hypotheses but also in concrete positions. That is why their formulations of the present issues by formalistically applying the formulae show a lot but tell us very little.

They are more inclined to propagandising their accepted tenets than to probing deeper into their tenability. But revolutionaries today can't just take everything the teachers said and apply that like religious dogma to changed historical circumstances. As Lenin put it in 1915: "One cannot be a revolutionary Social-Democrat without participating according to one's powers in developing this theory [Marxism] and adapting it to changed conditions".

We have not the slightest intention of poking our nose into the dull business of 'Majoritarianism' of the 'faction'. We are more interested in the needs of the epoch than in erecting impediments to its present business. We ask ourselves, "How to move ahead, how to step forward?" Lenin shows the path:

"Hundreds of new organisations should be set up for the purpose without a moment's delay. Yes hundreds, this is no hyperbole ... If we fail to show bold initiative in setting up new organisations, we shall have to give up as groundless all pretensions to the role of vanguard. If we stop helplessly at the achieved boundaries, forms and confines of the committees, groups, meeting, and circles, we shall merely prove our own incapacity. Thousands of circles are now springing up everywhere without our aid, without any definite programme or aim, simply under the impact of events. The Social Democrats must make it their task to establish and strengthen these circles, to assist them, to give them the benefit of their own knowledge and experience, to stimulate them with their own revolutionary initiative." [New Tasks and New Forces]

So it would be futile to try to bail the ailing platform out of its destined degeneration. Its methodology, ideas and ideals, its explicit and implicit positions on the questions of decadent capitalism, state capitalism, trades unionism, parliamentarism, nationalisation, etc., its inherent inclination towards acclaiming itself to be the 'real Left' (of course, not the 'Communist Left') and all that it holds and preaches are non-dialectical and unscientific. And so last, but not least, it has been excruciating for us to note, on a number of occasions, that a few of the platform leaders are addicted to telling lies and behaving conspiratorially.

And who knows if their passions are not more complex than their impassioned rancour revealed in their baseless slanders. Even the propositions put forward by the editor of Lal Pataka in the CC meeting do not appear in the circulars of the CC. Cleverness is no substitute for sense. Violence of norms begets violence of forms and in the course of time acquires an autonomy of its own. Thus the platform now limps along its trajectory. Its influence is on the wane. It has got caught up in a process of sclerosis. A cadaver of its discrete doctrines. Therefore it would be a mere waste of time and loss of energy to endeavour, in vain, to mould a few 'incarnators' into Marxists. Instead, we should employ all our efforts and available elements in the process of restructuring a new platform with a view to forming a nucleus of a revolutionary proletarian party, in the course of which political confrontations and collaborations will become the real tasks to be performed. We all know that "it takes a long time to plant a real flower, one that will last". So let us move ahead, with our attitudes and ideologies based on dialectical and historical materialism - let us try to grow a real plant that will bloom - a plant that will grow up to a proletarian party. Hence we propose to restructure our platform in India in collaboration with the IBRP [The Bureau which co-ordinates the international work of organisations - the CWO, PCInt - Battaglia Comunista and comrades in France] on the basis of the following political criteria "which exclude from its framework both the capitalist left and the neo-spontaneist and councilist spectrum:

1. Recognition of the revolution of October 1917 in Russia as proletarian.
2. Recognition of the break made with social democracy in the first two Congresses of the 3rd International.
3. Complete rejection of state capitalism and self-management.
4. Rejection of all present communist and socialist parties as bourgeois.
5. An orientation towards an organisation of revolutionaries which bases itself on the doctrine and method of Marxism which it recognises as the science of the working class.
6. Rejection of all possibility of subordinating the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie.
7. Recognition of the organising role of the party in the daily struggle of the working class as well as in the revolution itself."

On the basis of an agreed framework as such, let us initiate contracts boldly and widely within India as well as at an international level, let us establish circles for intensive and extensive study, discussions and debates for the maturation, the growth and selection of revolutionary forces.

Communist greetings,

Editor, Lal Pataka

For no other reason than shortage of space the following letter and our reply have had to be extensively edited.

Dear Comrades,

... Some of our comrades, particularly those associated with Lal Pataka, are very seriously studying the IBRP's texts ... We are very glad to note that IBRP had decided to continue correspondence with us through CWO delegates to build up a closer contact in the struggle for building up an international party of the proletariat in the process of which we also endeavour to contribute our utmost.

... So far as methodology and ideological class struggle are concerned we are, perhaps, proceeding along the path followed by the CWO.

We have rejected the 'Three World' and 'Two World' theses. We hold that the strategic world perspective facing the proletariat in each part of the globe is the same and so the proper organisation to encounter world capitalism must be a party of the world proletariat. Neither an 'International' based on federalism, nor an association of independent national parties, but a party - only a party of the world proletariat based on its units at state or national levels will be the proper organisation to lead the proletariat to its destination. Essentially the task of the communist groups in each country is to translate and transmit the strategic communist programme into the specific conditions there. They have to study and explain the real situation dialectically with all its complexities and accordingly work out the tactics and apply them by defining the concrete slogans there.

The areas where capitalism was imposed upon from outside through colonisation (here we leave aside its implications in America, Canada and Australia), the capitalist mode of production being super-imposed upon the pre-capitalist modes, the problems have become very complex. In course of the expansion of dominance of the capitalist mode of production and its conquest of the different sectors of the economy capitalism has destroyed as well as subordinated and absorbed the pre-capitalist formations. This has led to a complex combination of politico-economic as well as juridical practices, which has spawned a complex set of institutions to serve as their proper container. And herein lies the root of our problem in India.

India is a country where feudalism drank its life to the lees and thus engraved all its relations with all its manifestations into the heart of society. So Indian society inherits the legacies and social encumbrances of the past which are very deep-rooted. The 'left-overs' of the pre-capitalist social formations, though very fast disintegrating and fading out, are still no less a force to be ignored. And here lies the root of all sorts of petty-bourgeois socialism, broadly speaking - 'Leftism'.

Class consciousness is determined by class struggle. The intensity

of class struggle depends on the sharpness of class polarisation of the society which again is based on the levels of growth of capitalism. Naturally, immature economy breeds immature philosophy. Incoherent capitalist growth in India under the colonial dominance of British capital brought forth a crippled bourgeoisie and an immature proletariat along with an incoherent ideology. It was only after the victory of October that a microscopic fraction of the bourgeois intellectuals in India became attracted towards Marxism. But it was at that critical juncture in the history of the communist movement when the revolutionary proletariat lost the clarity of its perspective. Therefore, from the very beginning in the name of Marxism-Leninism what they started projecting, of course very faithfully, into the working class movement here - in India, were no more and no less than the accepted positions and schemata, desires and decisions, as and when formulated by the CPSU and the Third International during the twenties onwards. Thus they became (most probably unknowingly at the initial period) the carrier of Stalinism - i.e. the theories of state capitalism in the husk of socialism - the sap of which was served in different dishes to the hungry class struggle in India. This was followed by its counter-part - Trotskyism and later on by the sugar-coated corollary of Stalinism in the name of 'Mao-Tse-Tung thought' - briefly, Maoism. In short, all sorts of vulgar socialism engulfed the working class movement and organisations in India.

Leftism and united-frontism are still understood to be identical with a transition to socialism. A 'transition' to 'the transition'! And the most funny phenomenon is that the majority of the Central Committee of the RPP holds that RPP is a real leftist (which is, according to them, real Marxist-Leninist) Platform, which distinguishes itself from 'Left Communist currents', while others - the existing socialist and communist parties and groups are only 'so-called leftists'. Thus the real problem for us in India is how to break out of the fetters of the traditions and legacies of leftism, spawned and nourished by the recognised communists of all shades (both official and unofficial). ...

Naturally the course of our advance is also dialectical. It is quite obvious that combinations (unity) - breaks (struggle) - combinations (unity) anew is a reality which, once again, we are going to face in India. RPP is now in the process of degeneration due to its dogmatism on almost all questions. The majority of the CC has emphatically refused to tolerate any 'open polemics' on the already-stated, even tactical, positions of the platform. Actually the majority decision to that extent by an outright rejection of the proposal put forward by the editor of Lal Pataka that on the basis of accepted strategic positions, polemics should be allowed in our journals on questions such as trades unionism, parliamentarism, nationalisation, etc. forces us to reject the platform and to start a process of replacing it by another. ...

The very existence of capitalist accumulation through concentration and centralisation requires, on the one hand, a general ideal container to accomodate all the socio-economic activities and inherent conflicts in favour of the dominating class, which is provided by parliamentarism based on universal adult franchise. On the contrary, it also requires another set of institutions to

absorb the reactions of the process of production and reproduction of the same set of labour-capital relations cyclically. This is provided by trades unionism.

As regards the question of parliamentarism we hold that no instrument of the bourgeois state apparatus can be used by the proletariat as a means of revolutionary transformation. But on the question of using parliamentary elections as a revolutionary tribune we abstain from putting up candidates, but participate independently on behalf of our own platform in the political campaign to expose the hollowness of bourgeois democracy and to clarify the revolutionary perspective by distributing leaflets, mass meetings, etc. We agree with your contention that: "The era of mass working class parties, gradually built up on the basis of a combination of reformism and winning over the masses to the long-term aim of revolution is passed. With it has passed the possibility of today's revolutionary organisations being in a position to use elections and parliament in the day-to-day way as the old Social Democratic parties. And since Marxists understand that today there are no longer any progressive bourgeois parties (even if they operate in the name of the working class) the question of tactical support for such organisations no longer arises." Yet, because at the time of any general election masses are drawn and involved in the bourgeois political debates and discussions communists cannot afford to lose the chance of putting forward their expositions and propositions in concrete political terms for the consumption of the masses, especially when their political hunger has been roused. It is a tactical question and a method to that end must be evolved.

You have correctly pointed out the "worrying concept" incorporated in a reply to you from one of our comrades, that it is not possible to smash "this bourgeois organisation from within". For any Marxist it is axiomatic that proletarian power can be built up only through independent organisations of the class which only can intervene in the life and relations of capitalist society and, in due course, forcibly disarm and dissolve the bourgeois state apparatus which includes parliament too.

Coming to the question of the role of the trade unions at the decadent phase of capitalism and correspondingly the dialectical positions and attitude communists must hold. We agree with your anatomy of the dynamic of trades unionism.

So far as the upholders of the RPP's official position are concerned, the trades unions to them are "always" "inevitable", "natural", "spontaneous", "permanent", "essential", "indispensable" and "only" working class organisations which are extremely important instruments "in the daily economic and political struggle" of the class "against the bourgeoisie". They opine that the trade union movement will have to be extended from the limits of economic struggles, for which a revolutionary party is needed. To them the party will perform this task in the following way: "It is the capitalist state which endeavours to contain the trade union movement within a specific boundary and enacts laws accordingly. The revolutionary party opposes this by all means and for this it does not want to liquidate trade unions. On the contrary, by

capturing the leadership in its own hands the party directs the movement toward its esteemed goal. Further, they hold that this institution will also carry on serving the interests of the working class even after the revolution, during the transition. However, these people are also in the practice of sprinkling choice abuses, as always by Stalinists and Maoists, instead of putting forward scientific analyses to those who differ. Correspondingly, they have branded these comrades, like us, who are upholding the proposition of factory groups, as the meanest enemy of the working class. Because, in their syllogism, the sponsors of forming factory committees are "leftist anarchists, who do not understand Marxist formulas" of the origin and development of soviets they have declared war against "bureaucratism, opportunism and revisionism" and unfurled the banner of "one union in one industry and one nation-wide central trade union in place of the existing many under the leadership of the workers themselves."

Actually the whole of their logic crops up out of their pragmatism that "trades unionism is NOT a bourgeois democratic institution".

... Our comrades associated with Lal Pataka are of the opinion that we must move ahead with the Marxist method and analyse the present and draw revolutionary lessons and accordingly step forward. And thus we share your position that "In capitalism's epoch of imperialism and decline trades unions ... find themselves defending the interests of capital against the interests of the working class because a real defence of workers' living standards and jobs poses an implicit and increasingly real threat to the capitalist system itself" [IBRP letter, 10.4.85]. The clarity and precision of your analysis with which you have structured your texts on the issues being debated internationally have inspired us to review the whole problem and now we are on the same platform on these questions. We find a lot of information and other resources in the IBRP's illuminative researches and searches which are filling up the communication gaps in the process of analysing the present era of decadence, state capitalism and the roles of the bourgeois democratic institutions at different phases of the same social category. No social category and no institution instituted to serve it has ever remained unchanged or lasted for ever. Institutions are instituted, but to play their historic roles and then comes their ebb; they become obsolete and counter-revolutionary and are eventually rejected in inverse proportion to the growing strength of the revolutionary struggle. Trades unionism is no exception.

It is really childish quackery to make a diagnosis on the basis of apparent symptoms. 'Bureaucratism' or 'anti-democratic conduct of the struggle' or 'opportunism' or 'revisionism' - are all effects and not causes of the functioning process of the trades unions as a collective bargainer for negotiating the terms of sale for workers' labour power and for winning reforms. It is a statement of fact that "trade unions everywhere militate against the working class ..." [IBRP letter, 10.4.85 - printed above]. The bureaucratic labour aristocrats thesis is not only inadequate but inaccurate and we cannot hold that only by ousting the bureaucratic and opportunist leaders and replacing revolutionary leaders there, the trades unions can be transformed into organisations for a real defence of the workers' interests. ...

It is also apparent that the "one union in one trade" thesis (as is held by RPP along with a few other groups) originates from the non-dialectical theorisation that opportunism and degeneration in the trades union movement are the results of the existence of multiple unions based on different shades of bourgeois politics - both right and left. Thus RPP's position is derived from the "multiple union" premiss.

The existence of multiple unions in India has a relevance to the history of the trades union movement here along with the development of ever-increasing and multi-coloured political groupings each opening a shop to trade with the terms of sale of labour power. Naturally, in spite of RPP's sincere, honest, but naive efforts to popularise the slogan "One Union in One Trade" the reality remains that all lend a deaf ear to the purely subjective expectation that one fine morning they will be happy to celebrate the inauguration of their cherished "One Union" when all separate union shops, along with their different hoardings and trade-marks, will have vanished in the air.

This slogan is like the petty bourgeois slogan "No war, only peace" - a non-dialectical outcry with no relevance to reality. The slogan itself implies that RPP has taken up the task of simply propagandising in abstract terms for the abandonment of all the separate and competitive party-sponsored union shops for an intended merger into a single monopolistic shop ... Just as the religious missionaries impart the sermon that men (both bourgeoisie and proletariat) should love each other, because love is good and they should not indulge in wars because war is bad ... just as good people advise the stock exchange brokers to abstain from brokery because it causes bankruptcy, so the majority-good people of the CC of RPP are advising the workers to form a single union themselves because disunity is very bad. Still wholly unaware of the basic cause of party-linked multiple unions, class disunity, today's anti-working class role for the unions, those petty bourgeois "liberals" throw up their hands in despair ... Long ago, Leo Tolstoy wrote: "I sit on a man's back choking him and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all possible means except getting off his back." So let those people carry on with their business of "majoritarianism" and childish and innocent concept of "One Union". But who cares, we must move ahead, we must step forward. Thus we also reject the "one union" thesis.

We have also drawn our inference that trades unionism has always been a necessary instrument of capitalism and now at its decadent phase, when reforms are reversed, the institutions instituted to win reforms must cross over to the other side of the barricade to take positions in the bourgeois trenches. We all know that quantitative changes lead to qualitative changes. Wars between primitive commune clans caused slavery. But when slavery reached its "imperialist" stage, slavery itself became the cause of wars. Man created money to serve as an instrument in the essential transformation of barter into an exchange cycle: $C_1 - M - C_2$. But under capitalism, in the trajectory of the metamorphoses of capital ($M_1 - C - M_2$ and $V = c + v + s$) money has become the master of man. Capital itself is labour - that part of labour which is accumulated

through a process of production and reproduction of ever-expanding value; but although a product of labour-capital, the dead and crystallised labour, lives by sucking living labour and thus stands in antagonism to living labour. Man-made instruments and money are supposed to help man, ... but capitalism has enthroned them to the position of man's master-ruler and the exploiter, who extracts the surplus value and puts it into his own levers of concentration and centralisation in each successive round of accumulation.

Similarly, at the progressive phase of capitalism the trades unions were 'of the workers' and 'for the workers' and now under decadent capitalism, the workers are 'of the unions' and 'for the unions'. Unions have to survive, and so a list of reforms! And the larger the list the more militant the union is - the more brisk is the business for the shop stewards, whether right or left, white or red.

Thus it is evident that the insurgent proletariat will be forced to tread over the corpses of the unions while establishing its dictatorship during the transitional phase of socialism to communism.

But the immediate problem is how to link the party to the mass of the class, how to get a footing in the daily struggle of the working class, how to draw the attention of the class to gain a hearing for the class conscious minority, how to project the alternative anti-capitalist perspective through a set of concrete demands to be formulated on the basis of only one yardstick - that they provide a framework for uniting the class as a whole, including the industrial reserve army. Communists have no option. The whole of society is ruled under the umbrella of bourgeois ideology. Therefore the communists are obliged to operate on the ground they are forced to occupy. And because the unions will remain alive so long as capitalism exists ... a naive repetition of a slogan calling the workers to leave the unions would be ridiculous. Instead, the slightest tactical opportunity ... of linking up the daily class struggle with the communist programme through a permanent anti-capitalist perspective must be utilised. And in this respect, if working within a union opens up that opportunity ... the communists cannot afford to lose it. Here again it should be noted that with such an objective one can get very little or almost no scope for continuing within any trade union, because even on the plea of indiscipline (actually due to political differences) unions throw out the workers from even the membership register. Practically no scope for expressing ideological differences is left. So only in the interest of the leaders and on the basis of their political designs the unions are being led. Thus trades unions are no longer the natural, spontaneous and primary organisations of the workers. They have become instruments in the hands of bourgeois parties (left and right) for transmitting all types of bourgeois political lines under different trademarks. However, communists are not against a particular union ... but against trades unionism. "It is not the task of communists to capture the leadership of organisations whose existence depends on the conservation of capital ... what we mean by working inside the unions is that we have to utilise any opportunity for influencing the workforce which attendance at meetings, strike assemblies, etc., called by the unions opens up to us. Communists in such a position will be arguing implicitly and explicitly for the struggle to go beyond the

unions because their task is to lead the struggle outside the capitalist framework."[ibid]

It is also very clear to us that the very term 'trade union' is such a conceptual container that it creates a psychological tendency to form different unions for different trades, even more, for different grades within the trades in the same factory, thus breeding disunity within the class. On the other hand, the term 'factory group' gives the class such a general organisational framework which can contain the whole class including the reserve army and infuse a tendency of unity. Factory committees, formed at factory or workplace levels with recallable delegates to serve as the nuclei of the units of class unity, can provide the framework of a class-wide organisation. Our task ahead is to 'organise' but how? Lenin showed the process. "Hundreds of new organisations should be set up ... without a moment's delay .. If we fail to show bold initiative in setting up new organisations, we shall have to give up as groundless all pretensions to the role of vanguard..."

In India we shall engage our endeavours to this end because only an organised and independent political presence of communists within the class can guarantee their leadership in the class-wide organisations of insurrection. We hope to contribute positively in this respect. We also hope that those days are not very far off when we stand on the same international platform in our joint struggle to establish a party of the world proletariat.

We have decided to produce and publish Bengali versions of the theses and texts of IBRP and we have already started our discussions anew for the formation of a new platform in India in the process of which we are looking forward to getting the benefit of your knowledge, experience and positions. ...

Communist greetings,

Editor, Lal Pataka

International Bureau to Lal Pataka: 3.8.85

Dear Comrades,

... It naturally heartens us immensely to find that ... a clear Marxist tendency is emerging which wants to directly relate to the IBRP. We therefore wholeheartedly welcome your decision and will do our best to give you all the political support we can.

It seems from your correspondence, especially your announced intention to establish a new platform within the framework of the IBRP, that RPP is already de facto split. However, the official position is not clear to us and although we do not want to be formalist about a situation which is obviously very fluid it seems that we have to still think in terms of a tendency which is fighting for a revolutionary perspective inside RPP as a whole. Certainly we think that your best course of action is to pursue political criticism and debate for as long as possible inside RPP, not with any illusions about holding everyone together in an organisation

where, from what you say, the majority explicitly define themselves against left communism, but with the aim of developing your own positions and winning over as many comrades as possible in the process of debate.

... At any rate, the crucial issue for us is the necessity for establishing a clear communist nucleus in each area which has the perspective and potential to develop political roots within the working class. We would see your first task in India therefore being to take the lead in forming such a nucleus by establishing a dialogue with as many organisations and individuals who are likely to listen as possible. We hope that the framework for developing political and organisational homogeneity would be the IBRP Platform itself (which basically includes the seven points you have outlined in your "Open Letter" to RPP) as well as its statutes. ...

... it is clear that your positions on trades unions and parliamentarism fall within the Marxist framework ... Differences here do seem to be of a tactical nature or even the result of lack of information and hence misunderstanding of IBRP positions. We agree, for example, that the question of using parliamentary elections as a platform for communist propaganda is a tactical one and none of us in the IBRP would be against leaflet distribution and intervention at campaign meetings.

As far as our strategy for establishing and maintaining links with the daily class struggle goes we ought to clarify a distinction here between factory committees and what we have termed 'factory groups'. While factory committees are the mass organisations of the class which will tend to spread throughout workplaces during the course of open class confrontation and die down again after the struggle is over (though linking up to form councils or soviets in the pre-revolutionary period); the factory groups we refer to are permanent nuclei of both party members and sympathisers who aim to inject a communist political perspective into the economic struggle. While the former implicitly acts outside the trade union framework and has the potential for taking on a political role, the latter consists of the conscious minority in any particular workplace which is consciously acting to expose the role of the trades unions and for political ends. In other words, the factory committees are the mass organs of the class as a whole which will be the future basis of the soviets. The factory groups are political arms of the party, the means of linking it to the class and in future the means for gaining a hearing within the class-wide organisations (i.e. as delegates in the factory committees and soviets). this is an important distinction to be made. ...

We are pleased to see that you have published some of our texts in Bengali: this is certainly a step forward into a hitherto inaccessible linguistic area for us. ...

We wish you well with the political project you are embarking on and look forward to our closer co-operation and working together.

Until we hear from you again, Communist greetings,

IBRP

PAMPHLETS IN FARSI

1. The Democratic Revolution: a Programme for the Past.
2. Letter from PCInt to SUCM [published in English in Revolutionary Perspectives #2.
3. Money, Credit and Crisis [originally published in RP#8].
4. IBRP Statement on the Iran/Iraq War [published in English in Workers Voice #18, in Italian in Battaglia Comunista year 42 and in French in Revue Communiste #21.
5. The Origins of Trotskyism [from RP#22].

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